



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

March 20, 2025

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

Re: BHA Opposition to RI - 2025 – H5606 –Wildlife Killing Contests

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting. Our members believe that North America's fish and wildlife should be managed following the best available science, and we work to enact policies that keep wildlife management authority in the hands of the biologists and experts who are most familiar with the resources under management.

With these things in mind, **the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) urges the Committee to oppose H5606**, which seeks to impose a statutory prohibition against wildlife killing contests in Rhode Island.

To be clear, BHA does not support, promote or sponsor killing contests as described in H5606. Offering cash, prizes or other incentives at a minimum complicates the traditional motivations that hunters and/or trappers take into the field in pursuit of game. Additionally, in some formats killing contests are precariously close to running afoul of some tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and can be a dubious practice as it relates to the scientific management of wildlife. At present we are unaware of any killing contests occurring within Rhode Island, or of any suggestion or intention that any sort of killing contest might occur here in the foreseeable future.

Rather than imposing a statutory prohibition at this point, which would essentially amount to solving a non-existent, highly speculative problem, we urge the Committee to support the RI Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) authority to manage Rhode Island's wildlife according to the best available science. Under current RI General Laws DEM is broadly empowered to "*adopt regulations fixing seasons, bag limits, size limits, possession limits, and methods of taking of fish, game, bird, and other wild animal occurring within the state.*" (§ 20-1-12). In carrying out this and the additional obligations of Title 20, DEM's director relies heavily upon the advice of biologists, land/habitat managers, and experts within DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife who are familiar both with the wildlife resources under management and how the hunting/trapping and non-hunting communities engage with these resources. If at some point in the future an organization or business endeavors to begin conducting killing contests within Rhode Island, which we again have no reason to believe will occur in the foreseeable future, DEM currently has the authority, management tools, expertise, and experience to respond appropriately at that time. Only after that, and if DEM's response is unsatisfactory, would BHA support the exploration of statutory restrictions.

To summarize BHA's position - while we do not support the killing contests that H5606 seeks to prohibit **the New England Chapter of BHA respectfully urges the Committee, and ultimately the entire RI General Assembly, to oppose H5606** and allow DEM to respond appropriately if this issue ever occurs within Rhode Island using the agency's current statutory authority.

Thank you for your consideration,

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