



## 2021 Montana Trapping & Related Bills

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INTRODUCTION: The Montana legislature's 2021 war on wildlife is unprecedented and very well-orchestrated. In our TFMPL's, boots on the ground, past legislative efforts over the years, there have been usually 2 trapping bills, significant as they were. Last session, in 2019 there were 5 trapping bills, 2 of which were ours with WOTR, and 2 related bills. Now look below. Bad bills from the past are being resurrected and passing. Some bills take us back 100 years, i.e. bounty bills, hounds after bears. Wildlife will increasingly be for the rich, powerful, and at their misery. Market hunting was made illegal years ago. Science is ignored, experts are absent as informational witnesses, and our voices are muted in this legislative session in Montana. Opposing trapping is bipartisan, but these trapping and anti-wildlife bills are passing basically partisan with few exceptions. This strategized anti-wildlife, kill wolves, especially, agenda is fostered from fear, hatred, greed, retaliation, and through ignorance. The majority of the legislators do not want the facts or the data. They do not matter. They just want us to go away. Montana has more varieties of wildlife than any of the other contiguous United States. For some, it is their last chance. Connect the dots, put in all the puzzle pieces, and Montana is going from the last best place to the worst place, especially for wildlife, and safe use of our treasured yet small portion of Montana, our public lands. This is not the Montana way or what the majority of us stand up.

Here is the rundown on trapping and related bills in the Montana 2021 legislature and TFMPL's position:

HB138: **Oppose**. Revise trap and snare tagging requirements and remove requiring written permission to trap on private land. Rep. Paul Fielder. TFMPL testified. This bill removed the requirement of a phone number being on the identification tag. The regulations had required snares have a metal tag with the owner's name, address, and phone number. Other traps could have the ALS number instead. Weakening private property rights, this bill removes the requirement for written permission to trap or snare on private property. It eases the ability to trap, makes it harder for a person in need to contact the trapper, as well as creates a he-said-she-said scenario on private land. [Passed House 76:22](#). On 3/12/21, it [passed in the Senate 39:11](#). [HB138 language](#). **Signed into law by Governor.**

HB163: **Oppose**. Revise the Fish and Wildlife Commission from 5 to 7 members, 1 from each region. Rep. P. Fielder. TF MPL testified. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and oversee Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. No requirement for balanced commission representative of all stakeholders. [Passed in House 94:4](#). Amended by Senate F&G. [Passed in Senate 31:19](#). Returned and [passed in House 93:7](#). [HB163 language](#).

HB224: **Oppose**. Allow snaring of wolves. Rep. P. Fielder. TF MPL testified. Snares are legal year-round in Montana but not for wolves. These inconspicuous cables will be stronger and of a larger loop trapping, injuring, and painfully killing larger animals, too, such as moose. Extensive research and disturbing findings on snares were submitted in written testimony. Experts on snares were not allowed to testify due to time constraints and that they were from out of state. [Passed by partisan vote in House FWP committee 12:6](#). [Passed in House 67:33](#). Democrat, Rep. Sara Novak, voted, "Aye". Republican, Brian Putnam, voted "No". [Passed in Senate F&G committee 7:4](#). [Passed in Senate 27:23](#). [HB224 language](#). **Signed into law by Governor Gianforte 4/9/21**.

HB225: **Oppose**. Allow increased wolf trapping season for another month from first Monday after Thanksgiving through March 15 threatening all, including grizzlies before and after hibernation. Rep. P. Fielder. TF MPL testified. [Passed in House 68:32](#). Democrat, Rep. Sara Novak, voted, "Aye". Republican, Brian Putnam, voted "No". [Passed by partisan vote in Senate F&G committee 7:4](#). [Passed in Senate 31:19](#). **Signed into law by Governor Gianforte 4/9/21**. [HB225 language](#)

HB367: **Oppose**. **A constitutional amendment** making hunting, fishing, and trapping a right; lethal means being the preferred manner to manage wildlife, and protecting all current methods to kill wildlife which includes, leghold/foothold traps, snares, conibear traps, drowning, beating, stomping, strangling, hounding, siccing dogs, poisons, killing contests/derbies, and "whack em" run predators over with snowmobiles. In 2004 Montanans voted overwhelmingly to amend the constitution, "recognizing and preserving the opportunity to harvest wild fish and wild game, not to trap. If passes 2/3 the legislature, i.e. 100 votes, it goes before the people in November 2022. Rep. P. Fielder. TF MPL testified. Hearing scheduled 2/13/21 canceled. Hearing 3/12/21 House Judiciary. [Passed in House Judiciary 12:7](#). Passed [House 66:34](#). Senate F&G hearing 4/13. **34 votes needed from the 50 Senate members to pass**. [Failed by 3 votes in the Senate 31:19](#) on 4/23/21. [HB367 language](#)

HB523: **Support**. Snares on public land must be relaxing snares between Jan 1 and April 30. Rep. Tom France. Tabled in House FWP Committee. [HB523 language](#).

HB524: Support. Snares on public land must all have relaxing devices and marked with flagging or signage. Rep. T. France. Tabled in House FWP Committee. HB524 language. Trappers testified putting the burden of responsibility of trapped dogs on the pet owners.

SB2: **Support**. Revise dissemination of information regarding wildlife locale. Senator Jill Cohenour. Tabled in Senate F&G Committee. [SB2 language](#).

SB60: **Oppose**. Trapper education for certain residents. Senator Pat Flowers. TFMPL testified. [Passed in Senate 39:11](#). After the first hearing, a favorable amendment was made in sync with TFMPL's opposing testimony, but the exemptions and omissions are significant and SB60 fails to meet the mark. Rather than the person's age being the criteria, the bill was amended to residents who purchased three trapping licenses in the past are exempt. However, those trapping for livestock or property protection, i.e. wolves, coyotes, foxes, are also exempt. Wolf trapping certification class will no longer be separate which contradicts the Montana Trapping Advisory Committee recommendations. Unlike our TFMPL/WOTR, [Trapper Education 2019 bill HB517](#), providing equal representation for interested parties, this advisory committee consists of trappers and FWP staff familiar with trapping. The MTA will also serve as instructors and their manual will be used. The bill applies only to residents. The non-resident trapper is not addressed. Passed [House 98:0](#). TFMPL was the only opponent in the last hearing but we were later joined by WOTR over zoom in support of our arguments. [SB60 language](#). **Governor's desk**.

SB267: **Oppose**. Reimbursement for costs for trapping and "hunting" wolves - a bounty. Senator Bob Brown. TFMPL testified. This bill is orchestrated by an out of state organization. There are no side boards to monitor costs and payments. As trappers already profit, and for a pittance to the state, they are not held financially responsible for all the incidental non-target animals injured, orphaned, and killed. Wolf pelts sell currently for \$300 - \$1,000. Bill enables more killing derbies. Passed Senate F&G. 2/25/21. [Passed in Senate 30:20](#) almost party line with one Republican opposing, Rep. Kenneth Bogner. [Passed House 60:37](#). [SB267 language](#). **Signed into law by Governor Gianforte**.

SB306: **Oppose**. **Revise 7 Fish and Wildlife Commission to require a minimum of 4 members are landowners in agriculture production**. Senator Mike Lang. TFMPL testified. Private landowners, ranchers and agricultural producers, would dominate in their role overseeing the Fish Wildlife and Parks department. This would include fur farms meeting the criteria. Currently 1 member must be a rancher. No requirement for non-consumptive representation. Passed Senate F&G 2/25/21. [Passed in Senate 27:22](#) with 3 Republicans joining in opposition, Senator Steve Fitzpatrick, Senator Bob Keenan, and Senator Brad Molnar. Tabled in House FWP committee 3/18. Resurrected and amended [18:0 on 3/25](#) to [2 of the 7 commission members must be landowners engaged in agricultural production](#). Amended 4/28 to 3 commission members must be landowners engaged in agricultural production. [Passed in House 70:28](#). **Vetoed by Governor Gianforte**. [SB306 language](#).

SB314: **Oppose**. **Revise Wolf Harvest mandating the Commission set seasons "with the intent" to reduce wolves to the bare minimum to avoid relisting. 15 breeding pairs and 150 wolves. Enables hunting over bait, snaring, night hunting, multiple wolves with one tag, trapping and killing later stage pregnant wolves, all bars none.....** Senator Bob Brown.

TFMPL testified. Annually, they break records in Montana killing more and more wolves, Passed Senate F&G 2/25/21. [Passed in Senate 29:20](#) with only one Republican opposing, Senator Jason Small. [Passed in House FWP committee 11:7](#) on 3/14/21. **Moves to House for vote.** [House second reading passed 64:36](#). **Signed into law by Governor Gianforte.** [SB314 language](#).

HB637 [Generally Revise Fish Wildlife and Parks Laws](#). Rep. Seth Berglee. Lengthy "clean up" bill with amendments added. Mountain lions, use of hounds, residents, non-residents, private land and public land hunting ramifications, reclassification of wolves. Passed. **Signed into law by Governor Gianforte.**

**Not yet introduced:**

LC1473: [Establish preferred management methods aka kill wildlife](#). Rep. J. Hinkle.

LC1907: Increase wolf quotas. Rep. P. Fielder.

LC1912: Revise wildlife definitions. Rep. P. Fielder.

LC3034: Trapper reciprocity with other states. Rep. P. Fielder.

LC3112: [Reclassify wolves as predators](#). Senator B. Brown.

For more information on [Montana Fish and Wildlife](#) bills including anti- grizzly, hound hunting black bears and anti-bison bills.

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**To contact Montana Governor Greg Gianforte**

By mail: Office of the Governor PO Box 200801 Helena MT, 59620-0801

**By phone:** 406-444-3111 - Toll Free: 855-318-1330.

Share your comments with Governor Gianforte: <https://svc.mt.gov/gov/contact/shareopinion>

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Montana Office of Tourism PO Box 200533 Helena MT 59620-0501

Phone: 406.841.2870 Fax: 406.841.2871

Email: [diverson@mt.gov](mailto:diverson@mt.gov)

Online: <http://marketmt.com/Contact>

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