Submitted to the Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire regarding HR3932
Submitted by Nathan M. Roberts, PhD.
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Good morning committee members:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 3932. I bring to this discussion over 25 years of experience in wildlife management. My career began with a Ph.D. from Cornell University, where I focused on furbearer population dynamics. Since completing my doctorate, I have authored and published more than two dozen peer-reviewed manuscripts on the ecology and management of furbearing species. My professional journey has included roles with both federal and state agencies as well as academic institutions. Currently, I serve as the Dean of Academic Programs at College of the Ozarks, where I also lead the institution's wildlife management program. My academic and professional background has provided me with a unique perspective of the complex ecological, regulatory, and practical considerations involved in managing furbearer populations.

Wildlife management aims to maintain the long-term viability and sustainability of wildlife populations and seeks to enhance the positive contributions of these species while also reducing their negative impacts on people and ecosystems. Managing furbearers, like beavers, is complex and challenging due to various factors, including their intricate ecological impacts (both positive and negative), the potential for conflicts, differing public interests, and a complex legal and regulatory framework.

Wildlife managers successfully address these challenges using a range of well-established tools and strategies. Regulations and policies are carefully designed to meet specific conservation goals. In some cases, this means temporarily prohibiting the take of a species, while in other cases, regulated take may be allowed. In some cases, conflicts can be managed through non-lethal methods, but in other cases, lethal methods may be necessary. Similarly, in some situations, the best approach may be reactive and to respond to conflicts after they occur while in other cases, it may be most effective to be proactive and reduce the probability of conflicts by managing population size or habitats. There is a time and place for each of these approaches, but there is not a single approach that is appropriate for all cases. State wildlife agencies are best equipped to make these decisions as they have the local knowledge and experience needed. It is critical for wildlife managers to have a diverse toolbox, equipped with a variety of approaches and techniques, to employ to achieve conservation objectives.

Beaver management goals typically aim to maintain or restore the species' ecological role, maximizing its positive contributions to the ecosystem—such as wetland creation, water retention, and habitat diversity—while minimizing negative impacts like flooding, damage to infrastructure, or conflicts with landowners. Effective management also prioritizes the long-term viability of beaver populations across the landscape, ensuring that they continue to thrive in suitable habitats.

In areas where beaver populations are stable or expanding, management plans may incorporate provisions for sustainable take—allowing for regulated removal or harvest when populations are abundant and ecological conditions support it. This approach can

help balance ecological benefits with social and economic considerations, supporting coexistence between beavers and human communities while preserving the species for future generations.

It is important to recognize that allowing for some regulated take does not mean that the species will be imperiled or even decline in the long run. Wildlife managers have the ability to monitor species, and craft regulations, to achieve population goals. Regulations can be adjusted as needed, using data-driven population monitoring. State fish and wildlife agencies have successfully managed countless species this way over the past century from waterfowl to upland birds, deer, and elk. These methods are well established and supported by peer-reviewed literature.

Trappers, like other hunters, have a vested interest in maintaining healthy wildlife populations on the landscape. Just as deer hunters want to ensure that deer remain abundant in forests, and duck hunters value thriving waterfowl populations in wetlands, trappers recognize the importance of sustaining robust beaver populations. For trappers, the continued presence of beavers is essential not only to their traditions, but also to the broader ecological balance and responsible, science-based wildlife management.

Senate Bill 3932, however, needlessly restricts both regulated trapping and the professional discretion of wildlife managers. The bill undermines science-based management by imposing overly broad limitations that prevent effective response to local conditions, habitat variability, and landowner concerns. Furthermore, it is based on a false assumption—that allowing the take of beavers is inherently incompatible with maintaining

healthy, sustainable populations. In reality, decades of successful wildlife management across North America have shown that regulated harvest, including beaver trapping, can coexist with and support population stability, habitat health, and public tolerance of the species.

Rather than supporting conservation, HB 3932 risks weakening it by removing a vital management tool from the hands of professionals and sidelining the role of trappers as long-standing partners in stewardship. A more effective approach would recognize that adaptive, science-informed management—including sustainable take when appropriate—is essential to balancing ecological benefits with the needs of human communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. I welcome any questions or concerns the committee may have and am happy to provide additional insight as you consider this legislation.

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