



November 5, 2018

Governor Eric Holcomb
Statehouse
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797

Early this year, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) proposed an omnibus rule package that included language to allow the hunting and trapping of bobcats. This proposal was hugely unpopular and generated strong public opposition. In response to the public's opposition, the Indiana Natural Resources Commission's (NRC) voted to withdraw the proposed bobcat season from consideration at the Commission's May 15, 2018 meeting.

As the following information and attachments detail, IDNR is hosting meetings behind-the-scenes with select constituents to "discuss implementing a bobcat season here in Indiana". The Department was also actively involved in a communication workshop where the agenda focused in part on "harvesting bobcat". IDNR's recent actions conflict with the NRC Secretary's public assurances that all constituencies would be actively engaged prior to any future consideration of "sensitive" issues such as a bobcat hunting and trapping season.

Wildlife Rule Package LSA #17-436(F)

On May 15, 2018, the NRC considered final adoption of IDNR's biennial wildlife rule package LSA #17-436(F). This rule package proposed multiple amendments to 312 IAC 9 and generated a large number of public comments to issues of significant public concern.

According to the official minutes generated by the Commission, the NRC Secretary (and IDNR Director) Cameron Clark immediately moved to withdraw the rule provision (312 IAC 9-3-18.1) proposing a bobcat season. Clark acknowledged that this was a “rather sensitive topic to a number of people” and announced to the audience, “We have heard from you.” Clark went on to stress his appreciation for the public’s participation and interest in the process and further added that the agency needs to “work more with our constituencies on sensitive rules like this”. Clark also promised that moving forward he would:

“...commit to this Commission that if we were to propose a bobcat season, we will do just that, we will engage our constituencies. I would also suggest that if in the future we propose a bobcat season we would send it also to the advisory council first before it makes it to the Commission agenda.”

The NRC granted the Secretary’s motion to withdraw the proposed bobcat season from consideration leaving the existing law prohibiting the taking of bobcat in place.

IDNR attempts to resurrect bobcat hunting/trapping discussion

In spite of Secretary Clark’s public announcements of inclusiveness and appreciation for the public’s input, IDNR hosted a meeting with Indiana State Representatives Bacon, Bartels, and Lindauer in Velpen, IN, on October 2, 2018. According to the unedited notes from the meeting, it was attended by “50 plus sportsmen & sportswomen” and IDNR insiders. Another meeting targeting a similar pool of attendees is planned for a later date in Ferdinand, IN.

The majority of IDNR’s constituency that opposes bobcat hunting and trapping was neither invited to nor informed of either meeting. IDNR is allegedly keeping the meeting in Ferdinand quiet so that attendance can be limited to “local citizens.” This seems like a thinly veiled attempt to boost the proportion of hunters and trappers in attendance as opposed to “outsiders” who might question the ethics, science, or necessity of a bobcat season.

On October 30, 2018, IDNR personnel participated in, and apparently co-hosted, a “communication workshop” for wildlife professionals. The attached draft agenda lays out the workshop’s curriculum and includes “Working with the media about controversial topics” and “The science of how people interpret messaging”, including messaging about “harvesting bobcats” to “specific audiences”.

In light of the public’s strong opposition to a bobcat season and Secretary Clark’s public assurances to include all constituencies in any future discussions about sensitive issues such as bobcat hunting, any efforts by IDNR to garner support behind-the-scenes represents a gross violation of the public’s trust. IDNR’s recent conduct also serves to erode public confidence in the administrative rulemaking process and leads to unscientific and unpopular policy outcomes.

The Center for Wildlife Ethics urges you to communicate to IDNR that its conduct vis-à-vis the implementation of a bobcat season is unacceptable and may not be pursued again unless the proper procedure allowing for robust public participation is followed.

Your consideration of our concerns is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Laura Nirenberg,
Founding Executive Director
Center for Wildlife Ethics

cc: Letter from IN State Rep. Bacon
Communication Workshop agenda



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

Ron Bacon
Indiana State House
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
website: www.in.gov/h75
317-232-9833

COMMITTEES:
Public Health, Vice Chair
Interstate and International Cooperation
Commerce, Small Business, and Economic Development

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to announce that on Tuesday, October 2, the Department of Natural Resources and Representatives Stephen Bartels, Shane Lindauer and I will be hosting a meeting to discuss implementing a bobcat season here in Indiana.

Between 1970 and 2016, the Indiana DNR received bobcat reports from 68 counties, however reports are more common in southern Indiana. There are currently 47 states that have a bobcat population, and 40 of those states have harvest seasons. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss if Indiana should have a regulated hunting and trapping season. As the bobcat population continues to rise, we want to make sure we contain the issue at hand without jeopardizing bobcat populations in Indiana.

The meeting will be located at the Cool Springs barn, and will be held at 1 p.m. Please join us to express your views and opinions towards the issue at hand. Further details for the meeting can be found below:

Date: October 2, 2018
Time: 1 p.m.
Location: OFS Cool Springs
Address: 9412 E St. Rd. 64, Velpen, IN 47590

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Bacon".

Ron Bacon
State Representative
District 75

Here it is folks, be sure to mark your calendar, and plan on attending.

RB: ea



Communicating Your Message – workshop for wildlife professionals

October 30, 2018

Hendricks County 4-H Center and Conference Complex
1900 Main St., Danville, Indiana 46122

DRAFT AGENDA

- 8:30 **Registration with refreshments**
- 9:00 **ITWS business meeting**
- 10:20 **Introduction**— Brian MacGowan, Chairperson, ITWS Continuing Education Committee
- 10:30 **Working with the media about controversial topics**—Dr. Fred Whitford, Clinical Engagement Professor, Purdue Pesticide Program, Purdue University
- 12:00 **Buffet Lunch**
- 12:30 **The science of how people interpret messaging**—Beth Forbes, Science Communication Director, Agricultural Communication, Purdue University
- Split up into groups
- Feedback on information about chronic wasting disease and harvesting bobcats
 - Prepare a message for specific audiences
- 2:55 **Closing remarks and evaluation**
- 3:00 **Adjourn**

This event is part of a series of formal Continuing Educational Workshops presented by the Indiana Chapter of the Wildlife Society and Indiana Society of American Foresters in conjunction with Purdue University, Department of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Hendricks County 4-H Center and Conference Complex
1900 Main St., Danville, Indiana 46122

