



Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society

Trapping Position Statement

Conflicts can and have occurred between trappers and grouse and woodcock hunters and their hunting dogs mainly through the use and placement of foothold traps, body gripping traps or snares placed for large carnivores (bobcat, coyote, fox or wolf) on dry land. Regulations and seasons vary by state including the size, type and placement of these traps. The Society has been involved in the development of trapping regulations with states and trappers associations in order to reduce these conflicts.

In 1996, the then International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (this organization is now known as the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) began a program to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping as a way to improve the welfare of captured animals and to document improvements in trapping technology. AFWA's membership includes all 50 state fish and wildlife management agencies, federal agencies, and conservation organizations including the Ruffed Grouse Society. BMPs are based on the most extensive research effort of animal traps ever conducted in the United States. Traps tested were selected based on knowledge of commonly used traps, previous research, and input from expert trappers. Trapping BMPs include suggestions on practices, equipment, and techniques that will provide trappers and wildlife biologists with practical information to use in the field. See http://fishwildlife.org/?section=best_management_practices for the full set of BMP recommendations.

Regulated trapping plays an important role in the ecology and conservation of furbearers – mammals that can be trapped for their fur. Trapping is part of our cultural heritage that provides income, recreation, and an outdoor lifestyle for many citizens through use of a renewable natural resource. Both trapping and hunting provide opportunities for fostering stewardship values and connecting to the outdoors. Regulated trapping is an important wildlife management tool and has been effective in controlling predator numbers, some of which can impact ruffed grouse and woodcock populations.

The Society encourages both trappers and hunters to adhere to proper field ethics. The use of a public resource demands that each user group exercise both courtesy and personal responsibility in the field. Respect for oneself, landowners, other people, the wildlife resource, and the land summarizes this expression of courtesy and responsibility. Each individual and user group should act in a way that will reflect positively to each other.

The policy of RGS/AWS in regards to trapping is to:

1. Provide education for bird hunters on proper techniques to remove dogs from traps or restraints.
2. Work with federal and state agencies, Trappers Associations and others to minimize conflicts between user groups and promote responsible use of our natural resources.
3. Support the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) for trappers to reduce potential conflicts with bird hunters and their dogs.
4. Support trapper education programs that explain proper trapping techniques and the Trapper's Code of Ethics.
5. Support the use of regulated trapping for sustained harvest as an effective method of managing furbearers.
6. Recognize the economic and recreational benefits of trapping.