

Town of Willison Animal Trapping on Town Land Policy

- 1) **Purpose:** This policy has been drafted in response to citizen concerns regarding animal welfare and public safety. The purpose of this policy is to prohibit the nonessential use of body-gripping and cage traps on town property, while preserving the right of the town to trap animals on lands it owns when essential for the protection of town infrastructure, public health and safety.

This policy shall guide the internal decision-making processes of the town of Williston but shall not have regulatory authority over the citizens of the town. As stated in Vermont statute (24 V.S.A. § 2295), the town cannot regulate hunting and trapping directly by enacting an ordinance that bans trapping altogether or that attempts to regulate the types of traps used. Trapping is currently regulated by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife in accordance with Vermont statutes.

2) **Definitions:**

- a) **Essential Trapping** shall mean trapping for the purpose of 1) managing a threat to public safety, 2) managing a threat to property or infrastructure that cannot otherwise be addressed, or 3) wildlife research and/or monitoring with animal welfare oversight.
- b) **Nonessential Trapping** shall mean trapping for any purpose other than the types of trapping listed as essential.
- c) **Furbearer** refers to the following species: beaver, otter, marten, mink, raccoon, fisher, fox, skunk, coyote, bobcat, weasel, opossum, lynx, wolf, and muskrat.
- 3) **Policy:** Vermont law (10 V.S.A. § 4707) requires a person trapping on another's property to obtain permission from the landowner. The Town of Williston Selectboard shall not grant permission to: 1) set a trap for nonessential purposes on town owned land and 2) access a stream from town land to set a trap for nonessential purposes.

Trapping is allowed on many federal and state public lands. Wildlife Management Areas are open to hunting, trapping, fishing and other wildlife-related outdoor activities except in specifically designated areas. Wildlife Management Area maps are available on the Fish & Wildlife website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com).

The Selectboard will permit trapping on town land under the direction of town staff, where such trapping is deemed essential to manage beavers or other wildlife where infrastructure, property or public safety is threatened. The Selectboard will consider on a case-by-case basis and may permit trapping on town land for the purposes of research and/or monitoring by a governmental agency or academic institution, provided that accepted practices of animal welfare are followed.

a) General Procedures. The following practices relating to trapping of furbearers including beavers shall be followed:

- Adherence to Best Management Practices outlined in [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Best Management Practices \(Furbearer Management – & Best Management Practices for Trapping Program\)](#) and the [Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Statutes and Regulations](#). These species specific, detailed practices establish the types of traps and trap settings used (jaw spread, thickness, width, padding, coil springs, spring tension, chain type and length, chain anchor) to ensure the most safe, effective, selective, practical and humane methods and techniques for capturing furbearer species are being followed.
- Contracted trapper shall provide the town proof of license and a Certificate of Insurance.
- Contracted trapper shall provide the town an accurate location of the trap(s). The town shall ensure that at least 2 staff members are aware of the location.
- Contracted trapper shall notify the town when a nontarget species is captured.
- Trapping for research and/or monitoring purposes shall be conducted with adherence to standards established by the academic institution's Internal Review Board, responsible for research ethics oversight. Proof of adherence to such standards is required.

b) Beaver Management. The vast majority of essential trapping is done to manage beaver issues. The following practices relating to beaver management shall be followed:

- Use preventative measures where feasible such as 1) the installation of caging, electric fencing or abrasive tree paint around valuable trees in a floodplain or riparian area, 2) the installation of exclusion devices to prevent culverts from clogging or baffles to manage water levels, 3) avoiding trail crossings in areas likely to be impounded by beavers, and 4) constructing trail bridges with enough vertical clearance to allow coexistence with beavers.
- Adherence to Best Management Practices outlined in [Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife BMPs for Handling Human-Beaver Conflicts](#).
- The Conservation Commission will develop a regular monitoring program for trails to identify potential beaver problems and implement appropriate control measures within 1 year of adoption of this policy.
- Beaver problems should be brought to the attention of a Fish and Wildlife warden and/or wildlife biologist in the Agency of Natural Resources regional office closest to the problem site or the Wildlife Services Hotline.
- To the degree feasible, lethal control of beavers shall be conducted by trained and licensed trappers during the legal beaver trapping season which runs from the fourth Saturday in October through the end of March the following year.
- If determined not feasible, an exception can be made for emergency situations to allow trapping out of season.
- **The Town Manager, in consultation with the Director of the Department of Public Works, shall determine whether trapping is essential to protect town-maintained infrastructure.**

c) Posting Town Properties. The Town prohibits hunting, shooting and non-essential trapping on the following Town owned parcels that are posted in accordance with State statute (10 V.S.A. § 5201):

- Mud Pond Conservation Area
- Mud Pond Country Park
- Sucker Brook Hollow
- Five Tree Hill Country Park
- Catamount Community Forest

Town owned parcels on which the Town does not currently prohibit hunting, but under this policy prohibits nonessential trapping include:

- Brownell Mountain
- Allen Brook Natural Area
- Mahan Farm
- Burnett Property
- Jacob-Krantz Property
- Lyon Property (Town Hall Fields)
- Pine Ridge Forest
- Marshall Blueberry Parcel
- Water Tower Parcel (on Mountain View Rd)
- Finney Open Space (north of Allen Brook)

Signage shall be posted at all entrances to parcels of public land listed in Section 3 (c) of this policy where trapping is being undertaken to notify the public that there is wildlife management including trapping in progress and please stay on trails only. For the avoidance of doubt, this requirement to post signage does not apply in the town right of way.

In cases where the town must conduct trapping near areas with established trails, the town may implement temporary closures to reduce risks to the public.

d) Enforcement. Hunting and trapping regulations are enforced by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Game Wardens. Citizens or the Williston Police should contact the Game Warden if they observe illegal hunting or trapping activity.

Those who trap on Town owned parcels without the express permission of the Selectboard may be subject to a civil action for trespass, in addition to all other remedies available by law and equity.

Adopted by the Selectboard on May 16, 2023


Selectboard Chair