

Senate Passes SB 32 – Roxy’s Law



ANIMAL PROTECTION VOTERS NEWS

By a vote of 23 to 16, the New Mexico State Senate passed Senate Bill 32, the Wildlife Conservation and Public Safety Act, also known as “Roxy’s Law.”

Senate Bill 32 makes critical strides towards protecting all those who enjoy the outdoors, humans and animals, by prohibiting traps, snares, and poisons on public lands (with a few important exemptions). The bipartisan vote demonstrated strong legislative backing for a bill that is supported by the majority of New Mexicans, from hunters and nature enthusiasts to dog walkers and park visitors.

Bill sponsor Senator Roberto “Bobby” Gonzales (D—Ranchos de Taos) said, “With the passage of SB 32, New Mexico is helping to protect outdoor enthusiasts, wildlife, companion animals, and all New Mexicans who use public lands. Economic growth and stability come from increased, safe outdoor recreation and other activities on public lands. The dangerous methods of trapping, snaring, and poisoning on public lands have kept us from moving forward like we should and now we are at a point that our neighboring states have enacted similar bills, making them more likely to benefit from outdoor dollars. I am proud to sponsor Senate Bill 32 so that we can move forward in prosperity and in protecting our animals and people.”

Senator Brenda McKenna (D-Corrales) said, “I am proud to be a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 32—alongside Senator Bobby Gonzales, Representative Matthew McQueen, and Representative Christine Chandler and thank my colleagues for their votes in support of the bill. We as a society can no longer condone the barbaric practice of using traps, snares, and poisons on public lands. I have, for years, supported outlawing usage of these cruel methods, especially since I myself once purchased a leghold trap for under \$20 and could not open it without carefully using my feet. Imagine trying to free a pet or yourself under highly stressful and incredibly painful circumstances! I look forward to stewarding this bill through to the Governor’s desk, to protect the animals of the state and so we can all enjoy the outdoors in New Mexico.”

Traps, snares, and poisons are not just archaic and cruel, they are also indiscriminate, killing any creature unlucky enough to get too close to them. These victims include not just the fur-bearing or destructive wildlife the devices are nominally set to ensnare but also companion animals like Roxy, the beloved dog who in 2018 was strangled to death in front of her human. Since the 2020-2021 trapping season began, at least 9 dogs been caught in privately set traps and snares on public land. The most recent incidents occurred near Abeyta, Pecos, Rowe Mesa, Cloudcroft, and Dixon and don't include the unknown numbers who are not reported or tragically never found.

SB 32 will also save untold numbers of endangered wildlife. Nearly 150,000 native creatures have been killed by private trappers since 2008 including the endangered Mexican gray wolf called Mia Tuk who was caught in a trap and bludgeoned to death by a trapper in 2015. Two wolves have been injured in traps in New Mexico in the past 6 months.

"It's past time this archaic mass killing ended," said Chris Smith, southern Rockies wildlife advocate for WildEarth Guardians. "Public lands should be safe, wildlife should be respected, people should not be afraid to take their dogs or children on a hike. The solution is simple—the House now needs to follow the Senate's example."

"Traps are like landmines, catching and harming any creature unlucky enough to step on them," said Kevin Bixby, executive director of the Southwest Environmental Center. "It's time to get them off our public lands."

"As a wildlife biologist, I can say definitely that trapping is not a legitimate form of wildlife management," said Michelle Lute, PhD, national carnivore conservation manager for Project Coyote. "Our public lands and the wildlife that live on them must be protected from such cruel and wanton waste."

"No one who visits our public lands should be subjected to finding suffering wildlife in traps or the trauma of their own beloved dog being harmed," said Mary Katherine Ray, Wildlife Chair of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club, who has experienced the anguish of both.

"New Mexico Wild Action Fund believes that wildlife is held in public trust for the protection and continued enjoyment of all New Mexicans and should not be commercialized. We applaud Senators Gonzales and McKenna and Representatives McQueen and Chandler for their efforts to end the practice of trapping on our public lands," said Mark Allison, Executive Director of New Mexico Wild Action Fund.

Animal Protection Voters' Chief Government Affairs Officer, Jessica Johnson, noted, "New Mexicans overwhelmingly agree that it is past time for New Mexico to join our neighboring states of Colorado and Arizona and say goodbye to traps, snares, and poisons on the public lands we share. Let's not wait for more or bigger tragedies to happen before taking action."

“Mexican gray wolves are the most endangered subspecies of gray wolf in the world. Despite steady population growth over the past 20 years, trapping continues to hinder our ability to recover this important species,” says Michael Dax, New Mexico representative for Defenders of Wildlife. “The time has come to get traps off our public lands.”

“Trapping on public lands is indiscriminate and an ineffective tool for wildlife management, killing thousands of unintended animals instead of targeted predators; it’s primary motive is private profit from a public trust resource,” said Greg Peters, Public Lands & Wildlife Advocate for Conservation Voters New Mexico. “By ending trapping on our public lands, we will make them safer for NM residents and NM wildlife – creating more equitable access to nature while benefiting our local outdoor economy.”

“Today’s vote gives us hope that very soon, rare and beautiful animals will no longer fall victim to cruel and indiscriminate leghold traps and strangulation snares,” said Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity in Silver City. “These killing devices should never have been allowed on public lands.”

Senate Bill 32 will now cross over to the House of Representatives, where it will be championed by co-sponsors Rep. Matthew McQueen (D-Galisteo) and Rep. Christine Chandler (D-Los Alamos).