

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4692

By Delegate Foster

[Introduced January 12, 2024; Referred to
the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
then Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §20-2-5 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
 2 generally to hunting and fishing; permitting trotlines, droplines, and minnow traps to be
 3 lawful if certain conditions are met; and permitting jug fishing.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. WILDLIFE RESOURCES.

§20-2-5. Unlawful methods of hunting and fishing and other unlawful acts; Sunday hunting.

1 (a) Except as authorized by the director or by law, it is unlawful at any time for any person
 2 to:

3 (1) Shoot at any wild bird or wild animal unless it is plainly visible;

4 (2) Dig out, cut out, smoke out, or in any manner take or attempt to take any live wild animal
 5 or wild bird out of its den or place of refuge;

6 (3) Use or attempt to use any artificial light or any night vision technology, including image
 7 intensification, thermal imaging, or active illumination while hunting, locating, attracting, taking,
 8 trapping, or killing any wild bird or wild animal: *Provided*, That it is lawful to hunt or take coyote, fox,
 9 raccoon, opossum, or skunk by the use of artificial light or night vision technology, including image
 10 intensification, thermal imaging, or active illumination. Any person violating this subdivision is
 11 guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall for each offense be fined not less than
 12 \$100 nor more than \$500, and shall be confined in jail for not less than 10 days nor more than 100
 13 days;

14 (4) Hunt, take, kill, wound, harass, or shoot at wild animals or wild birds from an airplane or
 15 other airborne conveyance, a drone or other unmanned aircraft, an automobile, or other land
 16 conveyance, or from a motor-driven water conveyance;

17 (5) Use a drone or other unmanned aircraft to hunt, take, wound, harass, transport, or kill a
 18 wild bird or wild animal, or to use a drone or other unmanned aircraft to drive or herd any wild bird
 19 or wild animal for the purposes of hunting, trapping, or killing;

20 (6) Take any beaver or muskrat by any means other than a trap;

21 (7) Catch, capture, take, hunt, or kill by seine, net, bait, trap, or snare or like device a wild
22 turkey, ruffed grouse, pheasant, or quail;

23 (8) Intentionally destroy or attempt to destroy the nest or eggs of any wild bird or have in his
24 or her possession the nest or eggs;

25 (9) Carry an uncased or loaded firearm in the woods of this state or in state parks, state
26 forests, state wildlife management areas, or state rail trails with the following permissible
27 exceptions:

28 (A) A person in possession of a valid license or permit during open firearms hunting season
29 for wild animals and nonmigratory wild birds where hunting is lawful;

30 (B) A person hunting or taking unprotected species of wild animals, wild birds, and
31 migratory wild birds during the open season, in the open fields, open water, and open marshes of
32 the state where hunting is lawful;

33 (C) A person carrying a firearm pursuant to §20-2-6 of this code;

34 (D) A person carrying a firearm for self-defense who is not prohibited from possessing
35 firearms under state or federal law; or

36 (E) A person carrying a rifle or shotgun for self-defense who is not prohibited from
37 possessing firearms under state or federal law: *Provided*, That this exception does not apply to an
38 uncased rifle or shotgun carried specifically in state park or state forest recreational facilities and
39 marked trails within state park or state forest borders;

40 (10) Hunt, catch, take, kill, injure, or pursue a wild animal or wild bird with the use of a
41 ferret;

42 (11) Buy raw furs, pelts, or skins of fur-bearing animals unless licensed to do so;

43 (12) Catch, take, kill, or attempt to catch, take, or kill any fish by any means other than by
44 rod, line, and hooks with natural or artificial lures, unless otherwise authorized by the director:

45 *Provided*, That snaring of any species of sucker, carp, fallfish, and creek chub and catching catfish
46 by hand are lawful if done by a holder of a valid license issued pursuant to §20-2-1 *et seq.* of this

47 code or is exempted from licensure pursuant to §20-2-27 or §20-2-28 of this code: Provided,
48 however, That (A) Trotlines and droplines are lawful if they bear a legible and waterproof
49 identification tag stating the name and address of the fishing gear's owner or the owner's Division
50 of Natural Resources identification number; (B) minnow traps are lawful if they bear a legible and
51 waterproof identification tag stating the name and address of the trap's owner or the owner's
52 Division of Natural Resources identification number; (C) lawful minnow traps must be attended at
53 least once every 24 hours; and (D) jug fishing, the use of a free floating device used to deploy a
54 hook and line to take or attempt to take fish, is lawful;

55 (13) Employ, hire, induce, or persuade, with money, things of value, or by any means, any
56 person to hunt, take, catch, or kill any wild animal or wild bird except those species in which there
57 is no closed season; or to fish for, catch, take, or kill any fish, amphibian, or aquatic life that is
58 protected by rule, or the sale of which is otherwise prohibited;

59 (14) Hunt, catch, take, kill, capture, pursue, transport, possess, or use any migratory game
60 or nongame birds except as permitted by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. §703 *et seq.*,
61 and its regulations;

62 (15) Kill, take, catch, sell, transport, or have in his or her possession, living or dead, any
63 wild bird other than a game bird, including the plumage, skin, or body of any protected bird,
64 irrespective of whether the bird was captured in or out of this state, except the English or European
65 sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), which
66 may be killed at any time;

67 (16) Use dynamite, explosives, or any poison in any waters of the state for the purpose of
68 killing or taking fish. Any person violating this subdivision is guilty of a felony, and upon conviction
69 thereof, shall be fined not more than \$500 or confined for not less than six months nor more than
70 three years, or both fined and confined;

71 (17) Have a bow and gun, or have a gun and any arrow, in the fields or woods at the same
72 time;

73 (18) Have a crossbow in the woods or fields, or use a crossbow to hunt, take, or attempt to
74 take any wildlife except as otherwise provided in §20-2-5g and §20-2-42w of this code;

75 (19) Take or attempt to take turkey, bear, elk, or deer with any arrow unless the arrow is
76 equipped with a point having at least two sharp cutting edges measuring in excess of three-
77 fourths of an inch wide;

78 (20) Take or attempt to take any wildlife with an arrow having an explosive head or shaft, a
79 poisoned arrow, or an arrow which would affect wildlife by any chemical action;

80 (21) Shoot an arrow across any public highway;

81 (22) Permit any dog owned or under his or her control to chase, pursue, or follow the tracks
82 of any wild animal or wild bird, day or night, between May 1 and August 15: *Provided*, That dogs
83 may be trained on wild animals and wild birds, except deer and wild turkeys, and field trials may be
84 held or conducted on the grounds or lands of the owner, or by his or her bona fide tenant, or upon
85 the grounds or lands of another person with his or her written permission, or on public lands at any
86 time. Nonresidents may not train dogs in this state at any time except during the legal small game
87 hunting season. A person training dogs may not have firearms or other implements for taking
88 wildlife in his or her possession during the closed season on wild animals and wild birds, except a
89 person carrying a firearm for self-defense who is not prohibited from possessing firearms under
90 state or federal law;

91 (23) Conduct or participate in a trial, including a field trial, shoot-to-retrieve field trial, water
92 race, or wild hunt: *Provided*, That any person, group of persons, club, or organization may hold a
93 trial upon obtaining a permit pursuant to §20-2-56 of this code. The person responsible for
94 obtaining the permit shall prepare and keep an accurate record of the names and addresses of all
95 persons participating in the trial and make the records readily available for inspection by any
96 natural resources police officer upon request;

97 (24) Hunt, catch, take, kill, or attempt to hunt, catch, take, or kill any wild animal, wild bird,
98 or wild fowl except during open seasons;

99 (25) Hunt or conduct hunts for a fee when the person is not physically present in the same
100 location as the wildlife being hunted within West Virginia; and

101 (26) Catch, take, kill, or attempt to catch, take, or kill any fish by any means within 200 feet
102 of division personnel engaged in stocking fish in public waters.

103 (b) Notwithstanding any ballot measure relating to Sunday hunting, it is lawful to hunt
104 throughout the State of West Virginia on private lands on Sundays with the written consent of the
105 private landowner pursuant to §20-2-7 of this code, and it is lawful to hunt throughout the State of
106 West Virginia on federal land where hunting is permitted, in state forests, on land owned or leased
107 by the state for wildlife purposes, and on land managed by the state for wildlife purposes pursuant
108 to a cooperative agreement.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to permit fishing trotlines, droplines, and minnow traps to be lawful if certain conditions are met. The bill permits jug fishing, which is using a free-floating device to deploy a hook and line to take or attempt to take fish.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.