



MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MOORHEAD™

7 February 2021

Subject Line: Please support HF 387 – A bill to modify turtle taking provisions

To: Peter.Strohmeier@house.mn

Dear Representative Strohmeier:

I am a Professor of Biology at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) and have been studying the ecology of (*Chrysemys picta*) painted turtles with my MSUM research students in the Rollag, MN, area for 20 years. In our long-term study on unharvested populations of turtles (2001-2021), we live-trap, mark, record data, and release the turtles to study behaviors, population trends, growth rates, etc. Even in our unharvested populations, we have not seen a noticeable increase in numbers over the years. There is still lots of nest mortality of the eggs and road mortality. As others have probably already told you, painted turtles can be long-lived (up to 60 years or so) once they reach adulthood. They generally grow slowly in these northern climates and do not reach sexual maturity for a number of years. Therefore, commercial harvest with few or no limitations can be very detrimental to the population, especially if females that are large enough to breed are harvested.

Turtles are a very important component of aquatic ecosystems and commercial harvest is simply not sustainable. Did you know that sex determination in almost all turtles (including our MN species) are temperature-dependent?? (Sex in turtles is NOT determined by XY chromosomes). If temperatures are warmer during incubation, you get all or a preponderance of females, while with cooler temperatures, you get males. Mixed temperatures give you some of each sex. This is why the threat of global warming (climate change) is such a threat. If eventually there are few or no males with which the females can breed, populations will go extinct. Why should we put unnecessary stresses on turtle populations where a few people can exploit current populations for their own personal gain? Turtles are a natural resource that everyone should share and enjoy. In MN, you cannot go out and commercially harvest (with few or no limits) species like deer, waterfowl, fish, etc --- so why is this allowed for turtles? Commercial harvest of MN turtles needs to stop – it is the ethical and ecological thing to do. In ending, I might add that over the last 20 years, we have captured, marked, and released over 1,000 painted turtles. During this same time-period, we have only seen or captured about 10 snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*) – they are already on a serious decline in our area of MN.

Please support HF 387 and help protect Minnesota's turtles for future generations.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Bruns Stockrahm, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology, Wildlife Ecologist
Minnesota State University Moorhead
1104 Seventh Avenue South
Moorhead, MN 56563

Office Phone: 218-477-2576, Cell Phone: 701-367-3045, FAX: 218-477-2018

stockram@mnstate.edu or donna.stockrahm@gmail.com <http://web.mnstate.edu/stockram/>