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Re: Ban For-Profit Turtle Trapping in Missouri

We, the undersigned scientists -- with collective expertise in conservation biology, ecology, population dynamics, wildlife management and other areas relevant to turtle conservation -- urge the Missouri Department of Conservation to ban commercial collection of Missouri's turtles.

Scientists have repeatedly found that freshwater turtles cannot sustain any significant level of wild collection without suffering population declines. For example, a [2014 Missouri study](#) found that under mean demographic rates, softshell turtles could sustain no harvest at all without population declines, and common snapping turtles could withstand only minimum rates of juvenile harvest and no adult harvest.

The science shows that Missouri's turtle trapping regulations need to be amended to prevent turtle declines. Under current state regulations, holders of a commercial fishing permit may take unlimited numbers of common snapping turtles, smooth softshells and spiny softshells from the Missouri and Mississippi rivers with no closed season.

To ensure the health of Missouri's turtles and the waterways where they live, we ask that the Missouri Department of Conservation promptly propose a ban on for-profit exploitation of the state's turtles.

Sincerely,

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