

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

FEBRUARY 20, 2024 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: NH Fish & Game Department, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301.

Commissioners Present: R. Green, B. Temple, E. Stohl, S. Price, J. Titone, P. DeBow, M. Hodgson, J. Caveney & C. Hodgdon & A.J. DeRosa.

Commissioners absent/excused:

Belknap County Commissioner- seat is vacant at this time.

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman E. Stohl called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m., and asked the audience to join in the pledge of allegiance. He informed the audience that the public is entitled to attend all Commission meetings and when recognized by the Chairman, the public may speak on any item on the agenda. The Chairman reserves the right to limit comment to the extent necessary for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

1.) Commissioner R. Green moved to approve the January 16, 2024 Commission Minutes, as written, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote carried with 8 in favor, 2 abstentions (M. Hodgson & J. Caveney).

At this time, Chairman E. Stohl removed items 2d. & 2e. from the consent agenda and reported that they would heard individually.

Commissioner R. Green moved to accept consent agenda items 2a., 2b., 2c., 2f. & 2g., as presented below, Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded.

2a.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$5,500.00 made to the Search & Rescue account to assist in purchasing safety equipment and to provide lifesaving training to Conservation Officers:

John Berry -	\$5,000.00
Dianne King -	<u>\$ 500.00</u>
Total:	\$5,500.00

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$7,500 from the NH Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation to go towards habitat projects on the William B. Ruger Jr., Wildlife Management Area in Croydon, NH, the Danbury Bog Wildlife Management Area in Danbury, NH, and the Lamontagne Wildlife Management Area in Deerfield, NH.

2c.) The Commission accepted three donations totaling \$122.50 from the below individuals, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- Stuart Marvin, Center Conway, NH - \$100.00
 - June, Jean & Jonathan Caron, Nashua, NH - \$ 12.50
 - Jerimiah & Andrea Beck, Gilford, NH - \$ 10.00
- Total: \$122.50

2f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from the NH Trappers Association, for use by the Wildlife Division for furbearer management.

2g.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 in memory of Ted Peabody from Thomas Angelosanto of Derry, NH, for use by the Wildlife Division for game management.

The vote was unanimous in the affirmative to accept the consent agenda items 2a., 2b., 2c., 2f., & 2g.

3.) Commissioner R. Green moved to accept the following donations from the NH Council of Trout Unlimited, total value \$5,599.00 and Commissioner B. Temple seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

- Check in the amount of \$500.00
- Firman 4550W Generator, valued at \$599.00
- Inflatable raft, valued at \$4,500.00

4.) John Magee, Programs Supervisor, Inland Fisheries Division, came before the Commission seeking approval to expend \$7,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to pay dam registration fees to the Department of Environmental Services.

Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, clarified for the Commission that the annual dam registration fees are \$27,000 and that the Inland Fisheries Division was seeking approval to expend an additional \$7,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to meet the \$27,000 total due.

Commissioner R. Green moved to approve the expenditure of \$7,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to pay dam registration fees to the Department of Environmental Services and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2e.) Jim Oehler, Wildlife Habitat Program Supervisor, came before the Commission seeking approval to accept the donation of a 240-acre property in Mount Vernon, NH, from the Estate of Joanne & Roger Pinchard, to add to the Department's system of Wildlife Management Areas.

Jim reported that in 2013, the Pinchards were engaged in estate planning and reached out to several conservation organizations, including NH Fish & Game, to inquire about donating their land. After evaluating their options, they determined that the NH Fish & Game was best aligned with their values and how they wanted to see their land managed. An enforceable pledge was signed by both parties. The Pinchards have since passed away and their estate attorney has reached out to initiate the donation procedure.

Jim further elaborated that the property consists of 50 acres of hay and cornfields, 60 acres of wetlands, including a beaver impoundment, red maple swamp, and a shrub swamp, with the remainder in hemlock, oak, red maple, and pine forest. He reported that this habitat diversity would support a variety of wildlife, while also providing excellent wildlife based recreation opportunities.

Commissioner R. Green moved to accept the donation of a 240-acre property in Mount Vernon, NH, from the Estate of Joanne & Roger Pinchard, to add to the Department's system of Wildlife Management Areas and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2d.) Jim Oehler, Wildlife Habitat Program Supervisor, came before the Commission seeking approval to accept the donation of two islands, totaling 11± acres in the Pemigewasset River in Thornton, NH, from LCJ Holdings LLC.

Jim reported that the islands represent unique and important wildlife habitat and are located 0.5 miles north of the Pemigewasset Wildlife Management Area. The Pemigewasset River and the islands are the highest ranked wildlife habitat in the NH Wildlife Action Plan. LCJ Holdings LLC has been working on a large scale, multi-phase, 500- acre development project over the last seven years and own the two islands in the Pemigewasset River abutting their development project in Thornton. These islands have a documented population of the state endangered cobblestone tiger beetle and currently represents the only known occurrence of the species in the Pemigewasset River Watershed. The Department has negotiated an agreement for the acquisition, in fee, of the two islands as mitigation for rare wildlife and habitat impacts that result from the development project.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to accept the donation of two islands, totaling 11± acres in the Pemigewasset River in Thornton, NH, from LCJ Holdings LLC and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

5.) Docket No. NHFGC: 2024-001, In re RSA 206:4-b Complaint Regarding New Hampshire Fish and Game Commissioner Price: Possible Appointment of K. Allen Brooks, Senior Assistant Attorney General, and/or alternate as Presiding Officer (Commissioner Price not participating).

Chairman E. Stohl moved that Senior Assistant Attorney General, K. Allen Brooks, serve as the Presiding Officer over the hearing, Docket No. NHFGC: 2024-001, In re RSA 206:4-b Complaint Regarding New Hampshire Fish and Game Commissioner Price and Commissioner R. Green seconded.

Chairman E. Stohl explained that Attorney Aslin represents the Department and Attorney Lucas represents the Commission, therefore, Chairman E. Stohl reached out to Senior Assistant Attorney General K. Allen Brooks, who agreed to serve as Presiding Officer.

The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1.) There were no questions for Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, regarding the monthly financial statement.

Chairman E. Stohl reported that he asked Kathy to do some research on other states license fees and compare the differences. He reported that she researched five other states license fees and has provided that information in a handout to the Commission.

He thanked Kathy for the valuable information.

2.) Henry Jones, Moose Project Leader, provided an update on current moose research being conducted by the University of NH for the Department. The primary goal of this project is to develop and evaluate the use of camera traps and unmanned aerial system surveys to monitor moose abundance and provide estimates of density.

Henry reported that during the period 2022-2025, research is being conducted statewide on moose by UNH via a Cooperative Project Agreement between the Department and UNH. Moose densities from cameras and unmanned aerial system surveys will be compared with those generated from the ongoing deer hunter survey. The results of this research will allow the Department to select the most suitable moose abundance monitoring technique. Accurate moose population abundance data is necessary for guiding management recommendations and addressing the desires of the diverse moose user groups in NH. (See attached presentation)

3.) Andy Timmins, Game Programs Supervisor, came before the Commission and reported that the Wildlife Division is starting the process of developing a new ten-year Game Management Plan. This plan will inform management decisions for white-tailed deer, moose, black bear and wild turkey during the period 2026-2035. He reported that the current management plan expires at the end of 2025. Andy reported that this would be the fourth long-term management plan, with the first one created in 1997.

He reported that biologists are currently working on updating comprehensive species assessments, which will be posted on the department's website. He further reported that public input would be gathered via surveys, with public input sessions being held during November 2024 – April 2025. The final draft plan will then be presented to the Executive Director and Commission for final review and approval during late spring or early summer of 2025. The revised plan will take effect January of 2026.

4.) John Magee, Programs Supervisor, Inland Fisheries Division, came before the Commission seeking approval to expend up to \$30,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to conserve 140.3 acres in Hanover, NH. (See attached presentation)

John reported that the Hanover Conservancy has recently purchased the 140.3- acre property that abuts a large area (approximately 2,800 acres) of conserved properties. The source and headwaters of Mink Brook are on the property, and the Inland Fisheries staff conducted a standard electrofishing survey at the site and at a nearby tributary and found healthy productive wild brook trout populations there.

In closing, John reported that the Fisheries Habitat Account funding will help solidify the conservation of the property and the project will add to a significantly large block of conserved lands. (See attached presentation).

Commissioner J. Caveney stated, “I am not sure why the Hanover Conservancy needs any money from NH Fish & Game, as they have a lot of money in assets.”

Adair Mulligan, Executive Director, Hanover Conservancy was present and responded, “We are the oldest local land trust, and are a well healed community, however, we have trouble raising funds for projects like this. This is the biggest project ever in 63 years. We have a \$1 million dollar loan, which is due in 7 months and are unable to sell the house on the property. We simply do not have the endowment that other organizations have and have been trying to build that since 2010.” In closing, she stated, “We have to unload our debt on this property fast.”

Commissioner R. Green inquired as to who controls the land.

John responded that the Hanover Conservancy holds the fee title and confirmed that the property would be open to the public.

Commissioner R. Green asked to see the agreement next month, prior to voting on this.

5.) John Magee, Programs Supervisor, Inland Fisheries Division, came before the Commission seeking approval to expend up to \$38,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to hire seasonal employees in FY’24 & FY’25 in order to conduct Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Surveys and NH Stream Crossing Team culvert and bridge surveys in multiple watersheds within Grafton County.

John reported that the Inland Fisheries Division is currently engaged in fish and habitat assessments across the state. He reported that they have been working with partners and developed the team to complete fish and stream crossing surveys in Grafton County. He reported that that this would be the second of several years needed to complete this multi-agency effort to assess brook trout populations and stream crossings in the area. There are 379 catchments remaining that need to be surveyed for fish and about 1477 stream crossing surveys remaining in the County.

In closing, he reported that staff would be working with Plymouth State University, Trout Unlimited, as well as folks from municipalities and volunteers, as this work cannot be completed in a timely or fiscally reasonable manner without these necessary seasonal employees.

Commissioner B. Temple inquired as to when these surveys would be conducted in Sullivan County. He reported that these surveys seem to be focused mostly around Grafton County.

Dianne Timmins responded that she would look into it and get back to Commissioner Temple.

At this time, Commissioner M. Hodgson moved to take this up as an action item and to approve the expenditure of up to \$38,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to hire seasonal employees in FY’24 & FY’25 in order to conduct Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Surveys and NH Stream Crossing Team culvert & bridge surveys in multiple watersheds within Grafton County, Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE: Public policy development & recommendations, as well as Commission advocacy before legislature.

Commissioner Price, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & Green.
Staff members: Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee met the morning of the February 20, 2024 Commission Meeting and discussed the following legislation:

Commissioner S. Price reported that the Commission took a position of being opposed to HB-1609, relative to material subject to disclosure following a public meeting under the right-to-know law. She reported that the bill was completely re-written and would not affect the Department.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support HB-1609 and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to oppose HB-1429-FN-A & SB-539, relative to establishing a procedure for the Department of Environmental Services to transfer ownership of dams to municipalities or others, including making loans, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support HB-1277 & SB-549-FN, relative to establishing a committee to study alternatives for funding the operation, maintenance, and repair of state owned dams and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support Fis 301.08, Moose registration at biological check stations, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to readopt Fis 303.05, Bobcat; there shall be no open season for the taking of bobcat, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support Fis 303.08, Annual Trapper's Report, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support Fis 303.12, Restrictions on Certain Traps, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support Fis 303.13, Award of Trapping Permits for State Managed Lands, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to readopt with amendment, Fis 308.03, Trapping Restrictions, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to readopt with amendment, Fis 310.01, Control of Black Bear Human Conflicts, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to readopt Fis 311.02, Licensing for Use of Leashed Tracking Dogs, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support Fis 311.03, Use of Leashed Dogs for Tracking Big Game Animals, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to readopt with amendment Fis 1102.07, Bear Guide Tags, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support HB-1029, relative to exempting certain persons from requiring a NH Landing License if such persons are not landing for the purpose of the sale of the lobster or crab they have caught, and the creation of a non-commercial landing license, Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: Commission professional development, education & policy recommendations related to Commission conduct & activities.

Commissioner Caveney, Chair; Commissioners: Temple, Hodgson & Titone.
Staff member: Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the committee did not meet.

SUSTAINABILITY & STRATEGIC PLANNING: Agency funding, development & oversight of strategic plan.

Commissioner Hodgdon, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, Hodgson & Titone.
Staff member: Scott Mason.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that the committee would be meeting on March 8, 2024, at 2:00 p.m., at Fish & Game Headquarters, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301, east conference room.

RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE: Policy recommendations related to agency infrastructure; including facilities, public access, habitat & wildlife.

Commissioner Green, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa & Temple.
Staff member: Dianne Timmins.

Commissioner R. Green reported that the committee did not go on their site visit to the Region 3 Fish & Game Office in Durham, NH, or visit the Boat Dock in New Castle, NH, as the majority of the committee were ill.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION: Engagement, partnership, awards, public recognition & education strategies for the public & interest groups.

Commissioner DeRosa, Chair; Commissioners: DeBow, Hodgdon & Price.
Staff members: Dan Bergeron, Kevin Jordan & Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee updated the Draft Commission Information Sheet and distributed a copy to all Commissioners. He asked for a vote of the Commission to support/accept the below document.

Commissioner P. DeBow moved to accept Commission Information Sheet, as written below, and Commissioner A. J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

What is the New Hampshire Fish & Game Commission?

The NHFG Commission is composed of eleven Commissioners; one from each county in the state, and a sole Commissioner representing the tidewater towns. No more than six Commissioners can be of the same political party. Commissioners must be well informed on the subject of fish and wildlife (inclusive of game and nongame) conservation and restoration. RSA 206:4-a. defines the duties of Commissioners to represent citizens, to be stewards of fish, wildlife and marine resources, and shall set general policy in six areas:

1. Conservation, protection, and management of wildlife and habitat,
2. Long-range strategic planning, including funding, of the fish and game department,
3. Acquisition, development and maintenance of public access to lands and waters for recreational use,
4. Public education and building support for NHFG projects,
5. Establish positions on proposed legislation affecting fish, wildlife, marine resources, and the overall management of the department and
6. Hear and adjudicate appeals requested under RSA 207:14,I.

The Commission administratively operates under a committee structure common to similar governmental bodies, such as a Board of Selectmen. RSA 206:7 requires the members of the Commission to elect a Commission Chair and a Secretary.

RSA 206:8 authorizes the NHFG Commission to conduct a search and submit a nominee to the Governor for the position of Executive Director for a term of four years. Subject to relevant RSA, the Commission's consent must be gained for release of funds from specified accounts, as well as, promulgation of rules under the FIS rules designation.

What do the day-to-day activities of the New Hampshire Fish & Game Commission look like?

The day-to-day activities of individual Commissioners vary and are often determined by a Commissioner's specific committee assignment and location within the state. For instance, Commissioners might speak at functions, participate in supporting NHFG department programs, testify at legislative hearings, respond to citizen inquiries, or attend sponsored activities, including educational and fundraising events, related to the Commission's statutorily defined duties.

It is important to note that NHFG Commissioners do not enforce statutes and underlying rules; this responsibility rests solely with Conservation Officers assigned to NHFG Division of Law Enforcement. Additionally, Commissioners are prohibited by RSA 206:4-b to be involved in personnel matters of the department.

According to RSA 206:5, NHFG Commissioners are volunteers and do not receive compensation for their service, however, they are reimbursed for actual and necessary travel and other expenses.

How do I engage with the New Hampshire Fish & Game Commission?

There are several ways constituents can engage with the entire Fish & Game Commission and the respective counties represented. You can contact your county New Hampshire Fish & Game Commissioner using the information provided on this website. Commissioners are typically reachable by either email or telephone.

Furthermore, the entire New Hampshire Fish & Game Commission meets on every third Tuesday of each month unless specified otherwise. The public is welcome to speak at the end of the meeting, at the discretion of the chair. While subcommittee meetings are listed on the website, they do not occur on a regular basis, so it is advisable to check back frequently for more information about these upcoming meetings.

RSA 206:7 requires only quarterly meetings; the current Commission maintains monthly meetings unless otherwise posted per RSA 91-A.

What are the subcommittees of the New Hampshire Fish & Game Commission?

The standing committees are as follows; Legislative, Governance, Sustainability and Strategic Planning, Resources and Infrastructure, and Public Engagement and Education. All the Committees draw on the knowledge base and experience of assigned Commissioners required under RSA 206:2-a. The Commission Chair assigns Committee chairs and committee members annually. Each committee chair is responsible for coordinating and conducting committee meetings, and reporting to the Commission, as a whole, during monthly meetings.

- **Legislative Committee:** public policy development and recommendations, as well as Commission advocacy before legislature.
 - *Commissioner Price, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & Green.*
- **Governance Committee:** Commission professional development, education and policy recommendations related to Commission conduct and activities.
 - *Commissioner Caveney, Chair; Commissioners: Temple, Hodgson & Titone.*
- **Sustainability and Strategic Planning Committee:** Agency funding, development and oversight of strategic plan.
 - *Commissioner Hodgdon, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, Hodgson & Titone.*
- **Resources and Infrastructure Committee:** Policy recommendations related to agency infrastructure; including facilities, public access, habitat and wildlife.
 - *Commissioner Green, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa & Temple.*
- **Public Engagement and Education:** Engagement, partnership, awards, public recognition & education strategies for the public & interest groups.
 - *Commissioner DeRosa, Chair; Commissioners: DeBow, Hodgdon & Price*

The Chair also appoints Commissioners to represent the NHFG Commission on two state-level advisory committees; the Lakes Management Advisory Committee and the Rivers Management Advisory Committee.

- **Lakes Management Advisory Committee:** Commissioner Price.
- **Rivers Management Advisory Committee:** Commissioner Hodgdon

What are the requirements to be a New Hampshire Fish & Game Commissioner?

RSA 206:2-a outlines the legal requirements for becoming a Commissioner. These include being actively licensed in outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, or trapping, as well as having experience in one or more of the nine fields: conservation, agriculture, management of wild lands, soil conservation, water resource conservation, fish and game management or propagation, conservation engineering, conservation law, or wildlife education.

How does someone become a New Hampshire Fish & Game Commissioner?

Any adult resident of the State of New Hampshire can submit his or her name and relevant qualifications to the Governor seeking nomination to represent their county of residence or the tidewater towns. A sporting club, as defined in RSA 206:2,III, through its board, may nominate one to three nominees to the Governor but this is not required for nomination. In the case of the Seacoast Commissioner; one to three nominees may be nominated by the Advisory Committee on Marine Fisheries; however, this is not a requirement for nomination. Upon receipt of interest by a person seeking an appointment, the Governor's office determines if the potential nominee meets the requirements of RSA 206:2-a. Upon completion of the vetting process, the Governor may, or may not, nominate the applicant to the Executive Council. This process continues until the Governor selects a nominee to be submitted to the Executive Council for confirmation by majority vote. This vetting and nomination process is the same for all commissions in the state of New Hampshire.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee would be meeting in the near future to discuss the Commission Award nominations.

SEACOAST REPORT: Commissioner J. Titone.

Commissioner J. Titone reported the Striped Bass Addendum passed with the goal of rebuilding the stock by 2029; therefore, going forward the limit will be one fish per day, measuring 28 to 31 inches in length. The Board initiated the Draft Addendum in response to the low probability of meeting the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline if the unexpectedly high 2022 fishing mortality rate continues. The Draft Addendum builds upon the 2023 emergency action by considering management measures intended to reduce fishing mortality to the target level in 2024.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's American Lobster Board modified its date for implementation of an increase to the lobster gauge size, as mandated by Addendum XXVII to the Interstate Fishing Management Plan. Beginning January 1, 2025, the minimum gauge size will be increased by 1/16" to 3 5/16". A corresponding increase in the size of lobster trap escape vents will be forthcoming as of January of 2028.

LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Price.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee did not meet.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Hodgdon.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that the committee met in late January and developed positions on pending legislation. He reported that the committee agreed with all the Commission's recommendations except the legislation relative to public meetings, as the Commission voted to oppose it, as we felt it was important for in-person meetings and the Rivers Committee voted to support it. He further reported that the next meeting would take place in April.

SEARCH COMMITTEE: Commissioners: M. Hodgson, Chair: Commissioners: E. Stohl, R. Green, J. Caveney & C. Hodgdon.

Chairman M. Hodgson reported that the committee met on January 30, 2024 and does not have another meeting scheduled at this time.

At this time, Commissioner C. Hodgdon moved to approve the January 30, 2024 Draft Search Committee Meeting Minutes, as written, and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner M. Hodgson reported that in the January 30, 2024 meeting, the committee finalized the Executive Director Supplemental Job Description. She reported that she distributed a copy to each Commissioner.

Commissioner R. Green moved to have the Executive Director Supplemental Job Description posted and Commissioner J. Caveney seconded.

The vote carried with 9 in favor 1 opposed (S. Price). Commissioner S. Price stated, "I'm opposed primarily because I feel the job description needs to be more detailed regarding the areas of study that is required. I feel this person should have some background in the fields, similar to what we are required to have to become a Commissioner and I would like to see those listed."

Commissioner M. Hodgson responded that in the job description, under required qualifications, we do reference RSA 206.8, as we wanted to highlight and call attention to the fact that there is statutory requirements. She reported that the committee did have extensive discussion on how to capture the goal and desire for the candidate to be a strong administrator and leader, in addition to relying on the subject matter expertise of the seven Divisions. She thanked Commissioner S. Price for her input.

In closing, Commissioner M. Hodgson reported that she would work with Dee Grimes, HR, Administrator, and the Department of Personnel to get this posted.

Chairman E. Stohl thanked Commissioner M. Hodgson.

OLD BUSINESS: Swanzey Lake:

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that he has been in discussions with Attorney Lucas regarding drafting a letter, signed by the Chairman, asking Marine Patrol to engage in discussion with NHFG to explore the idea that there should be a little more discussion before slalom permits are granted for this sort of activity in the future, especially small bodies of water.

Commissioner J. Caveney distributed a copy to all Commissioners.

Commissioner R. Green moved to approve the draft letter to Marine Patrol and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner R. Green announced that the Pointer Fish & Game Club Banquet would be held on April 18, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at the Budweiser Plant, in Merrimack, NH. He reported that all Commissioners are welcome and that tickets would be forthcoming from the Club.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS: Commissioners will report on their recent activities as it relates to Fish & Game Commission duties and responsibilities. This is an informational item only.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he attended a meeting at the Hackle & Tackle Club and spent an evening with Ellis Hatch's son. Ellis was a long-term Commissioner from Strafford County and served as Chairman several times throughout his tenure. He reported that the group showed him some great photos, expressed some hatchery concerns, had a few questions on the camera & tree-stand legislation, and were overall happy with the Department.

Commissioner S. Price reported that she met Steve Wheeler, former biologist with the Department, who is working on an American Kestrel Project. She reported that she was going to introduce him to her neighbors, who will allow him to put nesting boxes on their property to help with the project.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Mason reported that the Department is sharing an IT Lead, Dorice McCollough, with the NH Veterans Home. He reported that Dorice would sit at Fish & Game part-time and assist in organizing projects for the Department.

He reported that Governor Sununu nominated Patrick McGonagle of Gilford, NH, to serve as Belknap County Commissioner.

He further reported that he and Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries, would be providing two Hatchery Modernization Project Presentations for the public.

- February 27, 2024, @ 6:00 p.m., at Fish & Game HQ, Concord, NH.
- March 5, 2024, @ 6:00 p.m., at the NH Fish & Game - Region 1 Office in Lancaster, NH.

In addition, Director Mason reported that he met with the Coos County Administrator and Commissioner. He reported that Coos currently has multiple unincorporated townships, where the

county administers those townships. He reported that in their zoning ordinances, they have language to protect deeryards, brook trout habitat and other types of wildlife habitat.

He reported that the Department of Public Works has put out the Request for Bids for the Project Manager for the Hatchery Modernization Project and we are currently going through that process.

Further, he reported that he met with the NH Guides Association and the NH Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism has expressed an interest in promoting the Department's Licensed Guides as part of their Tourism Promotion Program.

In closing, he reported that an additional \$3,000 was added to the Commission's Travel budget for the rest of year.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Geno Marconi, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Marine Fisheries, spoke relative to a motion made at a meeting of the Advisory Committee to close the harvest of surf clams from February 15 – May 15, in the seacoast area. He reported that he was ill and unable to attend that meeting to vote on that. He reported that he has written a letter opposing that motion and provided Director Mason with a copy. He further reported that he is the Director of the Port Authority and manages three fish piers, Hampton, Rye & Portsmouth. He reported that the day after that vote, he received numerous calls and inquiries as to how to go about addressing this. Some inquired if a petition would be effective. He reported that he believed petitions to be a way to get your opinion heard and encouraged them to write to the Commission & Director Mason. For full disclosure, he reported that he assisted with the wording of the petition.

In closing, he stated that he would let the Chief of the Marine Division update the Commission at the next meeting as to what happened at the Advisory Committee on Marine Fisheries Meeting.

Julia Sinclair, Newmarket, NH, thanked Commissioner J. Caveney for being willing to write the letter to Marine Patrol regarding the Swanzey Lake Slalom Ski permits and get to the conversations started. She further stated that she could not help but notice that there have been numerous snowmobile accidents, fatalities & hiking rescues, and inquired if anything could be done to educate the public.

Colonel Jordan responded that there have been numerous rescues and felt that it was mostly due to it being a low snow year and with people recreating in smaller concentrated areas, with low snow amounts and inexperienced riders. He stated, "Education is always our top priority and we work hard to do that."

Steve Angers, Conway, NH, reported that his Granddaughter caught her first wild brook trout in Mink Brook. He stated, "I really do encourage you to spend the money to protect that watershed."

At this time, 3:54 p.m., Commissioner R. Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Eric Stohl, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission