

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

JANUARY 16, 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 & A.J. DeRosa.

Commissioners absent/excused: M. Hodgson, J. Caveney & C. Hodgdon

Belknap County Commissioner- seat is vacant at this time.

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman E. Stohl called the meeting to order at 1:00 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 December 19, 2023 & January 5, 2024 Commission Minutes as written and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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

2a.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from Patricia Kelly, Londonderry, NH, in memory of Joseph Brown, of Derry, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2b.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$125.00 made in memory of William G. Kelley, of Epsom, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

Advanced Excavating & Paving LLC, Suncook, NH -	\$100.00
Kevin & Patricia Reeves, Epsom, NH -	<u>\$ 25.00</u>
Total:	\$125.00

2c.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from Joe Gerdy and Jocelyn & Marjorie Clark, of Cleveland Hts., OH, in memory of Jack Holden, deposited into the Small Gifts & Donations Account, for use by the Law Enforcement Division.

2d.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$3,480.00 deposited into the Search & Rescue Account:

Chis Forman & Angela Toms -	\$2,000.00
Heidi & Jerry Little -	\$1,000.00
Robert Merwin -	\$ 200.00
Group donation from the below donors- David & Annette Case	\$ 180.00

Randy & Kim Wheeler
Gregory & Jessica Roberts
Richard & Paula Hollins
Carla Rautenberg, in memory of John “Jack” Holden - \$ 100.00
Total: \$3,480.00

2e.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$250.00 from Thomas Quarles, Brookline, NH, for deposit into the Statewide Boat Access Fund.

2f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$1.00 from Roxanne Thompson, Ashland, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2g.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$250.00 from The Jaffrey Ice Racing Association of Jaffrey, NH, made to the “Let’s Go Fishing” Program.

The vote was unanimous in the affirmative to accept the consent agenda items 2a. – 2g.

2f.) Cory Riley, Manager, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, came before the Commission seeking approval to accept the donation of \$329,046.00 from the Great Bay Stewards.

Cory explained that the Great Bay Stewards are the official friends group to the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. They conducted a capital fundraising campaign to raise the required non-federal match for several grants to make improvements at the Glenn Cove Wildlife Management Area. She reported that these funds would go into the state budget to enable a contract to be put in place in the spring.

In closing, Cory offered to take the Commission on a tour of Glenn’s Cove Wildlife Management Area and to host a future Commission Meeting at the Great Bay Discover Center.

Commissioner R. Green thanked Cory for the presentation and moved to accept the donation of \$329,046.00 from the Great Bay Stewards to make improvements at the Glenn Cove Wildlife Management Area and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. 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.

2.) Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division came before the Commission and provided an informative presentation on licensing trends from 2018-2022 by resident, non-resident, and by several different license types, with graphs showing increases & decreases in license sales (See attached presentation).

Commissioner R. Green thanked Kathy for the presentation and stated, “Excellent job!”

Chairman E. Stohl asked Kathy to research what all New England State license fees were and to provide that information to the Commission at a future Commission Meeting.

Kathy agreed to do so.

Commissioner A. J. DeRosa inquired if the department receives tourism monies. He stated, “How can we engage in tourism dollars?”

Director Mason responded that the department’s mission is to manage and protect wildlife, not economic development. He further reported that he would be facilitating a meeting between Commissioner Caswell and the Guide’s Association to discuss economic development and opportunities. He stated, “It’s a small step, but a step forward.”

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he and Commissioner S. Price had a brief discussion the morning of the Commission Meeting relative to potential ways to seek additional funding for the agency.

He further inquired if anyone has discussed providing the Chamber of Commerce with information to aid in promoting getting the department’s various/different messages out to the public.

At this time, Commissioner R. Green moved to have the Public Engagement & Education Committee research the potential of working with the Chamber of Commerce to aid in promoting information to the public on the department’s behalf and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded.

Commissioner S. Price stated, “Shouldn’t we look into receiving some of the rooms & meals tax from bringing people into this state to fish, hunt, hike, canoe, kayak and wildlife watch. Why is the Fish & Game Department not getting a piece of that?”

The vote to have the Public Engagement & Education Committee research the potential of working with the Chamber of Commerce to aid in promoting information to the public on the department’s behalf 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 on January 9, 2024 and the morning of the January 16, 2024 Commission Meeting and discussed the following legislation:

Commissioner S. Price moved to oppose HB-1703-FN, relative to the sale of kangaroo and caribou meat and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to oppose SB-389, relative to extending the trout season for catch & release to December 31 and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price reported that HB-1116, relative to certain firearms to be used for the taking of game, has come up for reconsideration. She reported that staff recommends the Commission switch from opposed to no position on the bill and remain neutral.

Commissioner S. Price moved to adopt a no position on HB-1116, relative to certain firearms to be used for the taking of game and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded.

Commissioner R. Green stated, "I'm opposed because there are a lot of shotgun only areas in the southern part of the state that are in confined areas and I think towns could review this closer and potentially start closing areas to hunting."

The vote on the motion to adopt a no position on HB-1116, relative to certain firearms to be used for the taking of game failed with 2 in favor (S. Price, P. DeBow), 4 opposed (A.J. DeRosa, R. Green, J. Titone & B. Temple). Commissioner S. Price reported that the Commission's position remains opposed.

Commissioner S. Price moved to take no position on HB-1424, relative to the use of air rifles for hunting game and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The motion failed after Chairman E. Stohl voted to oppose and broke the tie of 3 in favor (B. Temple P. DeBow & S. Price), 3 opposed (A.J. DeRosa, J. Titone & R. Green), making the vote 4 opposed. Commissioner S. Price reported that the Commission's position remains opposed.

Commissioner S. Price reported that Commissioner A. J. DeRosa wanted to discuss another bill, HB-1102, relative to animal cruelty, as the language has changed from the original bill and they are concerned.

Commissioner A.J DeRosa stated, "It's essentially attacking any pure-bred dog in New Hampshire and basically ending the breeding of any working dog, which dramatically affects our department. It is targeting non-hunting dog category, expanded to any dog with any known health condition. I understand the good intention of the bill, such "puppy mills" etc. I am concerned where it could go and what it could include".

Commissioner S. Price moved to oppose HB-1102, due to the amendment, relative to animal cruelty and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The motion carried with 6 in favor, 1 opposed (R. Green).

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 was absent. Chairman Stohl 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 was absent. Chairman Stohl reported that the committee did not meet.

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 meet. He further reported that the committee would be meeting on January 26, 2024, at the Region 3 Fish & Game Office in Durham, NH, at 11:00 a.m., to visit the Boat Dock in New Castle, NH, which is in need of repair.

He further reported that there were significant leaks at Fish & Game HQ the day of the Governor & Council Breakfast and inquired if it was something the Resources & Infrastructure Committee should be involved in.

Director Mason responded that it was a drainage problem, which Bill Smith, Engineering Technician, addressed and seemed to work, as there were no leaks over the weekend, even with the inclement weather.

He further reported that the roof would be replaced using capital budget monies and the Division of Division of Public Works would be overseeing the project, including the bidding process.

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 met the morning of the January 16, 2024 Commission Meeting and revised the Commission's Information Sheet, clarifying the Commission's roles and responsibilities. He distributed an updated version of Information Sheet and asked the Commission to please review it, provide feedback, and be ready to vote on accepting it at the February 20, 2024 Commission Meeting.

DRAFT COMMISSION INFORMATION SHEET

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 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.

SEACOAST REPORT: Commissioner J. Titone.

Chairman E. Stohl asked the Commission for their thoughts on making the Seacoast Report into an Ad-hoc Committee, called Seacoast Committee.

Chairman E. Stohl moved to establish an ad-hoc committee called "Seacoast Committee", consisting of one Commissioner, J. Titone, and Commissioner R. Green seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

At this time, Commissioner J. Titone reported that the New Castle boat dock survived the recent winter storm that hit the coast hard.

He further reported that on January 3, 2024, a small group of anglers met with Geno Marconi, Director, Port Authority, and Governor Sununu, in Portsmouth, NH, to tour the building facility on the Portsmouth Fish Pier. He reported that the building was not currently being used due to safety & mold concerns. The group proposed repairing or replacing the building, as the anglers need to have a facility to use.

He reported that Port Authority Director Marconi would be making recommendations to the Speaker of the House and the Senate President, with the hope of obtaining funding to do an engineering study on what the viable options are for that building.

LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Price.

Commissioner S. Price reported that she participated in the last committee meeting via zoom. She reported that the committee reviewed legislation and voted on legislation that the Commission took a position on.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Hodgdon.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon was absent.

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

Chairman M. Hodgson was absent. Chairman E. Stohl reported that the committee did not meet.

OLD BUSINESS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS: Chairman E. Stohl asked Director Mason to update the plaque of names of past Fish & Game Commissioners on the back wall of the west conference room, to reflect Commissioners who have served to date.

Director Mason agreed to do so.

Chairman R. Green announced that there would be a memorial service for Jennifer Caveney, at St. Bernard's Catholic Church, 185 Main Street, Keene, NH, on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at 11:00 a.m., and is open to friends and family. In lieu of flowers, donations to CHAD (Children's Hospital at Dartmouth) are encouraged.

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 P. DeBow reported that he participated via zoom in a meeting with the Hanover Deer Team. He reported that a few years ago, Dan Bergeron, Chief, Wildlife Division, outlined the special permits given out to the Town of Hanover to help control deer in the suburban areas. He reported that the team asked him to visit them and they updated him on the permits that are issued to them annually. He reported that out of the 300 permits they only have a 23% success rate, thus, many permits go unfilled.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he has been having a great deal of constituents reaching out inquiring about tree-stands and ground-blinds. He inquired if there were some sort of "cheat sheet" that he could refer to, as he finds that many people have complicated questions and ask about certain scenarios, examples and such.

Colonel Jordan responded that he would prefer those types of calls and inquiries be referred to the Law Enforcement Division for clarity purposes. He reported that he does not mind Commissioners referring callers, as some inquiries are complicated and difficult to interpret sometimes.

Commissioner S. Price reported that she received a call from a constituent from Freedom, NH, relative to a deer in distress. She reported that the Law Enforcement Division handled the situation and dispatched the deer, as it had become blind.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Mason introduced Bill Smith, Engineering Technician, of the Facilities & Lands Division. Director Mason reported that bill comes to the Department from the food processing industry and has experience that will be helpful when it comes to the Department's new hatchery system.

He reported that he and Dan Bergeron, Chief, Wildlife Division, met briefly with Gordon Batcheller, Executive Secretary, NEAFWA (Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies).

Further, he reported that the memorial service for Ted Walski, former longtime Turkey Biologist, was held on January 6, 2024, in Keene, NH, with a great deal of people in attendance.

He reported that the Secretary of the Interior requested a presentation on the Department's BOW (Becoming an Outdoors Woman) Program, which took place on January 8, 2024, at the Owl Brook Hunter Education Facility in Holderness, NH. Director Mason thanked Nicola and the Public Affairs staff for arranging that. He further reported that the Secretary of the Interior also toured the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge, including visiting a saltmarsh restoration project that the Department of Environmental Services is working on.

He reported that the Department hosted the Governor & Council Breakfast on January 10, 2024 with many Commissioners in attendance. He reported that Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries Division, presented the Department's proposed Hatchery Modernization Project during the breakfast.

In closing, he reported that he, Dianne Timmins, and Bill Smith, attended a presentation at DNCR (Department of Natural & Cultural Resources) to learn about the historical resources preservation rules & regulations for the State of New Hampshire.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Steve Angers, Conway, NH, stated that he thought the more opportunity the department has to promote hunting & fishing with any sort of media broadcast would certainly benefit license sales. He further thanked the Executive Producer of Explore New England Magazine, Commissioner A. J. DeRosa, who is the videographer, for doing a large article regarding brook trout in remote ponds.

At this time, 3:31 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