

## NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

### MARCH 21, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

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

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

Seacoast Commissioner: Vacant

Commissioners absent/excused: C. Hodgdon

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman Green called the meeting to order at 1:00p.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 E. Stohl moved to approve the February 21, 2023 Commission Minutes and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2.) Consent Agenda – The following items were grouped together and noticed as consent agenda items to expedite action on routine matters, which may not require public discussion. Commission members may remove certain items, if further public input or discussion is deemed necessary.

Commissioner Temple moved to approve consent agenda items 2a. – 2h., as presented below and Commissioner DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2a.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$8,600.00 made to the Search & Rescue Account:

• Paul & Patricia Bisset	\$5,000.00
• Christian Forman & Angela Toms	\$2,000.00
• Marion Hauck	\$1,000.00
• Goldenchild Back Lake Nationals & Vintage Showdown Assoc.	\$ 300.00
• Jennifer Parkos	\$ 200.00
• Marvin Swartz	<u>\$ 100.00</u>
	Total: \$8,600.00

2b.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$600.00 made to the “Let’s Go Fishing” Program:

• Frank Dubisz, Jr., Manchester, NH -	\$100.00
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- Jennifer Topouzoglou, New Boston, NH- \$500.00  
 (in memory of Ernie Lapierre, N. Kingston, RI) Total: \$600.00

2c.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$1,000 from David & Grace Mann, Merrimack, NH, for use by the Boat Access Program.

2d.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$2,000 from the Meredith Rotary Club, Meredith, NH, for use in Inland Fishery Management, specifically the Large Lakes Program.

2e.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$145.00 in memory of Bernside “Bernie” Bartlett, of Georges Mills, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- Theresa Symancyk, White River Junction, VT - \$20.00
- Cynthia & Howard Anderson, West Springfield, NH - \$25.00
- Raymond Lagasse, Lagasse Family Trust, Lebanon, NH - \$50.00
- Peter Elder, Georges Mills, NH - \$50.00

Total: \$145.00

2f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$5.00 from Brian Pierce, Concord, NH, earmarked for nongame use.

2g.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from Cynthia Mooney, Hillsborough, NH, in memory of Tedd Redfield, Nelson, NH, to be deposited into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2h.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from The Friends of the Kimball Library, Atkinson, NH, for their appreciation of a bobcat presentation given at the Kimball Library, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

1.) Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, apologized to the Commission for not having the monthly financial statement done. She reported that she would get the Financial Statement to the Commission in the near future, as a great deal of her time recently has been spent performing additional duties due to the absence of a staff member in her Division.

2.) The Wildlife Division provided a presentation on hound hunting.

Andy Timmins, Game Program Supervisor & Will Staats, former Wildlife Biologist for the NH Fish & Game Department, provided a very informative presentation relative to hound hunting.

Andy reported that the focus of the presentation would be on the use of pursuit hounds for hunting in NH, specifically on larger breeds, as well as beagles, primarily used to hunt mammals.

He briefly reported on the history of man hunting with dog and stated that it was man that domesticated dogs approximately 20 – 30 thousand years ago, with the main purpose of acquiring food.

He further reported that in New Hampshire it is legal to hunt various mammals with dogs, such as bear, coyote, raccoon, fisher, fox, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbits, and snowshoe hare.

The presentation consisted of the following: (See attached for full presentation)

**Benefits:**

- Wildlife Population Control
- Individual Hunter Satisfaction
- Community Benefits (controlling wildlife populations)

**Sociological Values:**

- Tradition & Heritage
- Companionship & Community (bond between man & dog)
- Challenge of Sport

**Hounds Hunters Assist In:**

- Wildlife Research
- Wildlife Conflict and Damage Abatement
- Invasive Species Control (e.g., feral hogs)

**Law/Rules that Regulate Hound Hunting**

**Laws:**

- RSA 207:3 – Method of take
- RSA 207:3-e – Use of telemetry
- RSA 207:12-a – Dog training
- RSA 207:12-b – Reciprocity
- RSA 208:22 – Wild black bear

**Rules:**

- Fis 301.06 – Bear season, # dogs
- Fis 305.01 – Night training on raccoons
- Fis 305.02 – Training bear dogs
- Fis 814 – Field Trials
- Fis 1102.12 – Permit to use dogs to take bear
- Fis 1106.05 – Dog training permit

Will Staats has been a hound hunter in Vermont for many years and emphasized the bond between a hunter & his dog. He reported that safety of the dog and returning home at the end of the day is his number one objective. He reported that his dogs are Plott Hounds, which are courageous and very friendly, making them great pets, as well. He reported that the training season is very important because it takes tremendous commitment and time to raise these animals and train them to do what you want them to do and develop them to their full potential. It is common to run young puppies with older hounds, as they tend to learn from them and this a repetitious thing that you do for many days. He elaborated on the importance of the specialized GPS collars with training features and how they work and aid in preventing your dog from going

places you do not want them, in addition to helping avoid dangerous situations, such as road crossings, etc.

Commissioner Temple inquired as to how many hound permits the department typically issues in New Hampshire per year.

Andy responded that the department gives out approximately 250-300 permits per year to hunt bear with hounds.

Commissioner B. Temple inquired as to how many sportsmen like to run coyote with hounds.

Andy responded that the department does not have good data on that. He believes it to be minimal; however, a permit is not required to do so.

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that Will worked in the great north woods and was a wonderful biologist and great asset to the NH Fish & Game Department during his tenure.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported his Native American ancestors used dogs to hunt for as long as we have known the domestication of dogs, to run down bears, wolves and other animals, and is an important part of the landscape and ecosystem. He stated, "I have no doubt my ancestors would use the GPS collars today for the safety of the dogs and the animal they are trying to harvest." He further stated that we cannot judge an entire population in the state due to the ethics of one person or a negative experience they saw as not being responsible."

Tom Cross, Washington, NH, inquired as to what happens when a dog used to hunt coyote catches up with a coyote, as they cannot be treed.

Will responded that he has never hunted coyote with dogs, however, he knows individuals that have and normally the hunter shoots the coyote ahead of the dogs.

Peggy Longley, Sandwich, NH, addressed Will and stated that she was very happy to hear that the dogs are important to him and that she appreciates how smart they are. She inquired as to what technology on the GPS collar allows you to communicate with the dogs.

Will responded that there were three buttons to push to communicate with the dogs, the first button is a (tone), which he reported his dogs really respond well to, the second button (vibrate), which gets their attention and conditions them to come to you, the third button (electrical pulse), which has various degrees of strength. Will reported that he rarely uses this, however, the electrical stimulus is set very low and that he would use it to save their lives.

Chris Schadler, Webster, NH, inquired as to during the training season, when training young dogs, are those dogs permitted to take the animal that they are hunting.

Colonel Jordan reported that it very rarely happens, however, it would be an illegal method of take and the hunter would be required to report it to the Department.

She further inquired as to who enforces this law.

Colonel Jordan reported that the Conservation Officer are the ones who enforce the law.

Ken Coffin, Hillsborough, NH, inquired as to whether the GPS can identify posted land.

Will responded that there is a database available, which is an aerial photography application that you can download on your GPS, which identifies landowner information and boundaries.

Joan O'Brien, Amherst, NH, inquired, "What harm would it do to the hunting community if there was a law making it illegal to use a dog to hunt coyotes."

Chairman R. Green responded that this was something that would be up for consideration under the rulemaking process.

3.) Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries, came before the Commission requesting to expend up to \$31,300 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to hire seasonal employees in FY'23 and FY'24 in order to conduct Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture fish surveys and NH Stream Crossing Team culvert and bridge surveys in multiple watersheds within Grafton County.

Dianne reported that The Inland Fisheries Division is currently engaged in fish and habitat assessments across the state. We have been working with partners and developing the Team to tackle our next big data gap, which is Grafton County. This will be the first of many years needed to complete this multi-agency effort to assess brook trout populations and stream crossings in this area. There are 506 catchments in need of surveys for fish, with about 2200 stream crossing surveys needed in the County. We will be working with Plymouth State University, Trout Unlimited, as well as folks from municipalities and volunteers.

Without these vital seasonal employees, this work cannot be completed in a timely manner. The expense request has increased in an effort to be proactive, as there is discussion of a 10% raise for state employee, effective July 2023, as well as a potential reorganization of job positions and classifications by the Division of Personnel. We are asking to spend up to the total maximum needed if all of the potential changes go through in order to avoid the need to come to you a second time.

Chairman R. Green inquired as to when the surveys would end.

Dianne reported that these surveys would complete the data gaps in the cold-water program and help prioritize wild brook trout management efforts & grant funding. She stated, "This is an ongoing effort. We are constantly collecting data due to changes on the landscape, which in turn affects populations." She reported that communities, constituents and many other organizations utilize this database.

Commissioner J. Caveney inquired as to what might have caused the shift in the management focus of surveying watersheds in addition to rivers. Dianne responded that in the past, reporting was done on the rivers and we now focus on the watershed approach, as the

landscape surrounding said river, has a lot of entities that potentially shift your direction. She referred to the Beebe River in Campton, NH, and reported that staff surveyed the entire watershed, which resulted in multiple culvert replacements and the protection of land occurred, as well. She further reported that particular waterbody has a great deal of anglers, and once the message got out about the project, numerous partners participated and the department was able to get a big bang for our buck, so to speak, as far as restoration and angling opportunity.

Commissioner DeRosa moved to make this an action item and Commissioner Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner DeBow moved to approve the expenditure of up to \$31,300 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to hire seasonal employees in FY'23 and FY'24 in order to conduct Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture fish 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 & Stohl.  
**Staff members:** Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee met briefly the morning of the Commission Meeting.

Commissioner S. Price moved that the Commission take the position of oppose or support on legislation and take no position on bills monitored by staff, Commissioner Temple seconded.

There was question as to whether this motion was required, as there is already a motion on record in the April 12, 2022 Commission Minutes, which reads:

*Commissioner Green moved that from this point forward, the Commission's position on legislation will be to either support or oppose, and will provide staff with the reasoning on both positions, Commissioner Hodgson seconded. The vote unanimous in the affirmative.*

Commissioner S. Price withdrew her motion and Commissioner Temple withdrew his second to the motion.

At this time, Commissioner E. Stohl reported on research he conducted relative to the Fish & Game Commission's Authority on Rulemaking. (See attached)

Commissioner S. Price thanked Commissioner E. Stohl for the extensive research he did to obtain this information.

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

**Commissioner Caveney, Chair;** Commissioners: Lachance & Temple.  
**Staff member:** Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting and continued to review the Commission Handbook. He reported that the committee would be meeting prior to the April Commission Meeting.

Chairman R. Green reported that he would be making a motion to amend the Commission Handbook to clear up any gray areas, as it relates to reimbursable expenses. He reported that he formed a 3- member committee to review the questionable expenses and whatever they decided would be the final decision.

He reported that the outcome of the meeting was that Commissioners that attend legislative hearings would be reimbursed.

At this time, Chairman R. Green moved to amend the Commission Handbook, pg. 12, under Duties of the Chair, Section F, to add: *"Including testifying at Legislative Hearings"*, Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

As a result of the 3-member Commissioners Expense Committee Meeting, Commissioner M. Hodgson moved to amend CG-5, page 25, Reasonable and Necessary Expense Resolution, of the Commission Handbook, to insert a comma (,) after the words *public hearings*, and add *legislative hearings*, and assigned committee meetings, Commissioner Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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

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

Commissioner C. Hodgdon was absent from the meeting and will provide a report next month.

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

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

Commissioner B. Temple reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting and had discussion on Fish Hatcheries and the status of work through the pilot programs of HDR Engineering.

He requested an update/overview of some kind in April or May, from the Director's Office, in hopes of obtaining as much information as possible for the Commission and the public.

Chairman R. Green responded that he would speak with Director Mason about the presentation.

Commissioner B. Temple reported that the committee would be meeting prior to next month's Commission Meeting.

**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 to review the Commission Award nominations. He reported that the committee discussed creating an additional award called "The Commissioner Legacy Service Award". He reported that the committee felt that this would be a good way to honor those individuals who have showed support to the work the Fish & Game Department does prior to, during, and after being a Commissioner.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to create an additional Commissioners Awards of Excellence Award called "The Commissioner Legacy Service Award" and Commissioner Price seconded.

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated that while she appreciates the committee's desire to fit everyone in the right category, she did not see the need for another category in the awards program, as there are already eight categories and the Commission typically only presents three or four. She inquired if some categories could be removed, as she feels the awards should have some value and meaning behind it.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he agreed that the committee could look at removing some categories moving forward.

The vote carried with eight in favor, 1 opposed (M. Hodgson)

**LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Price.  
Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee met by zoom & discussed perusing getting back the fulltime DES- Lakes Management Advisory Committee position in order to meet its statutory requirements.

**NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Hodgdon.  
Commissioner C. Hodgdon was absent and will provide a report next month.

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A



**NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman R. Green reported that he met with Director Mason and discussed the location of the next three Commission Meetings.

Commissioner R. Green moved to hold the April, May & June Commission Meetings at the following locations and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

- April 18, 2023 – NH Fish & Game Dept., 11 Hazen Dr., Concord, NH (east conf. room).
- May 16, 2023 - Seabrook Town Hall, Selectmen’s Meeting Room, 99 Lafayette Road, Seabrook, NH.
- June 20, 2023 – NH Fish & Game Dept., 11 Hazen Dr., Concord, NH (east conf. room).

**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 S. Price reported that she is sponsoring the NH Fish & Game Department’s Search & Rescue (SAR) Program on Thursday, April 6, 2023, from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., in the Program Meeting Room, at the Moultonborough Public Library, 4 Holland St, Moultonborough, NH, 03254.



She reported that The NHFG SAR program is a public private partnership that allows Conservation Officers (CO) and not-for profit search and rescue groups to execute search and rescue operations around the state. Attendees will learn the additional requirements to be a Conservation Officer on the dedicated SAR team, as well as, a volunteer with LRSAR.

The presentation will include an overview of how a rescue operation proceeds, the equipment and time demands to be a SAR CO and volunteer, as well as, how to avoid needing to call on SAR when enjoying the outdoors of New Hampshire (such as, relying on mobile phones and GPS devices).

There will be a K-9 team available to discuss how dogs are trained in concert with their assigned CO to assist in SAR efforts.

In addition, there will be an overview of the Hike Safe card program, including information on the origin, purpose and importance of the program to outdoor enthusiasts. There will be a list provided containing items NHFG strongly recommends every hiker include in their pack.

The program is appropriate for all ages.

Commissioner B. Temple reported that starting June 1, 2023, the Old #4 Fish & Game & Snowmobile Club would be merged with the Sullivan County Sportsmen's Club and the official name will become The Old #4 Fish & Game Club.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Director Mason was absent from the meeting and will provide a report at the next meeting.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

Jean Slepian, Stoddard, NH, asked the Commissioners to make a commitment to consider all public comments received.

Weldon Bosworth, Gilford, NH, spoke to the hound hunting presentation and stated that he does not consider hound hunting to be fair chase.

Dianne Richardson, Springfield, NH, asked that the department consider putting the Dog Stealing Statute 466:42-a Stealing Dogs; Tampering With Collars on the website or in the hunting digest to keep people informed of the law and remind them that it exists, specifically prohibiting or tampering with and destroying collars or tracking devices.

Joan O'Brien, Amherst, NH, stated that she was commenting on behalf of the Voice of Wildlife and felt that the department did not address any of the concerns brought forward in the rulemaking petition relative to coyotes.

At this time, 3:38 p.m., Commissioner E. Stohl moved to adjourn and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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Ray Green, Chairman  
NH Fish & Game Commission