NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

OCTOBER 14, 2015 COMMISSION MEETING

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


Commissioners absent/excused:

Executive Director Normandeau – Present

Chairman Tichy 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 Chair reserves the right to limit comment to the extent necessary for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

1.) Commissioner Greco moved to approve the September 9, 2015 Commission Minutes as written and Commissioner Hubert seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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

   Commissioner Morse moved to approve consent agenda items 2a-2c as presented below, and Commissioner Carr seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

   2a.) Commission accepted a $30.00 donation from Ms. Sherrie Viglione, Ridgway, PA, to be utilized by the Department’s Search & Rescue Team.

   2b.) Commission accepted a $150.00 donation from Mr. & Mrs. Ellis and Christina Schmidlapp, Pittsburgh, PA, to be utilized by the Department’s Search & Rescue Team.

   2c.) Commission accepted a $250.00 donation from Mr. & Mrs. Jakob & Gisella Weissbach-Licht, Branford, CT, to be utilized by the Department’s Search & Rescue Team.

Commissioner Tichy reported that there were a few controversial items on the agenda this month.

He chose to hear action item #5 at this time.

5.) Chairman Tichy stated, “Pursuant to RSA 91: A; 2, this is deemed a public meeting, it is not a public hearing. The chair reserves the right to limit comment for the orderly conduct of the meeting.
This is for the Commission’s discussion and approval and I will not be taking public comment on the subject.”

Chairman Tichy inquired whether Commission McGonagle had any further changes to the proposed bobcat season since the last meeting.

Commissioner McGonagle responded that there were no additional changes, however, he may have neglected to mention something last meeting, to discuss guidelines for the use of tags for bobcats by guides.

Commissioner Phillipson stated, “There is one clarification under proposed changes, it should read rifle or handgun (rim fire only).”

Chairman Tichy stated, “I’m going to steal a phrase from a wildlife biologist. We should really look at the issue of the bobcat population as a great success story for the department. In the early 1980’s, the Director at the time, closed the season due to the declining numbers of bobcat. Thanks to good habitat, furbearer management, and thanks to the sportsmen’s dollars, we have enough bobcats for wildlife viewers, hunters and trappers to enjoy in this state. We spent a lot of sportsmen’s dollars on the bobcat study and have the best data available on the reproduction and numbers of bobcats in the country. We need to promote this as a success and move forward with the management of this furbearer/game animal and not let political or emotional bias effect our decision to re-open the season.”

Commissioner Phillipson moved to repeal the closed bobcat season & reopen rulemaking to establish a new bobcat season using the recommendations of the Policy Committee and Commissioner Carr seconded.

Much discussion ensued.

Commissioner McGonagle stated, “I feel strongly of the words you just spoke. I have a reservation with the numbers. I do not feel the numbers are adequate enough at this time to have an active bobcat season. I certainly think in the future there could be a limited season. I don’t think this is the time to do it. I think it needs a little more time.”

Commissioner Clews stated, “I’ve talked to folks and they feel the bobcat should not be hunted considering the numbers are too low.” He reported that he felt environmental issues could affect the animal as well, i.e., extreme winters, etc., and that he would be opposed to reopening the season at this time.

Commissioner Ryan stated, “I agree with the last 2 gentleman that spoke, review it again in 3 or 4 years.”

Commissioner Carr inquired as to what science Commissioner McGonagle was using to justify an extension of time.

Commissioner McGonagle responded, “I do not feel comfortable at this time. I’m afraid the numbers aren’t what they should be.”
Commissioner Baldwin stated, “I’ve talked with many people and my direction was toward delaying the season by a year or two. The scientific information is very thorough. We cannot manage people; however, we can adjust management to wildlife with bobcat and rabbits among them. In doing my homework, I would be in favor at this time with some modifications.”

Commissioner Patch stated, “The Wildlife Division did a great job on the survey and bobcat study and we were given some good figures to go by. The odds are slim of everyone taking a bobcat. We are being very conservative, 50 out of 1400. I am in favor of going to rulemaking.”

Commissioner Phillipson stated, “The bobcat will benefit from a season itself, as we will be able to obtain reliable, statistical data relative to bobcats. I would be in support of this.”


The regular agenda commenced at this time.

3.) Commissioner Hubert moved to go forward with rulemaking to change bear bait permit application deadlines & related topics and Commissioner Greco seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Dave Poole, Licensed Guide, reported that the new guide patch does not resemble the Fish & Game logo at all.

4.) The Commission reviewed the final proposal pertaining to the fee increase schedule.

Commissioner Baldwin moved to increase the saltwater fishing license by $10.00, making it $20.00 and Commissioner Phillipson seconded.

The Commission asked Doug Grout, Chief, Marine Division, his thoughts on the issue and whether he felt catch restrictions could change in the near future.

Doug responded, “I do not see things changing within the next 2 years or so, unless something drastic changes.”

Commissioner Clews stated, “Stripers were cut in half, no cod or haddock fishing, no blue fish at all. Things are very limited and I feel it would be a tough sell to increase the price. I would be opposed to an increase.”

Commissioner Greco stated, “It’s not good right now. Saltwater fishing has dropped off and they have a reduced catch. I don’t think it’s fair to the sportsmen right now.”

Commissioner Baldwin responded, “Basing it on 1striper is not the way to go. Freshwater has issues as well. I just mean fair is fair.”
Commissioner McGonagle stated, “We are selling less licenses as it is and increasing the license by $10.00 will be more of a reduction in license sales. I do not feel it’s a good idea to raise it $10.00.”

Commissioner Hubert agreed that the saltwater fishery is in a decline and felt it was not the appropriate time to increase the license price.

Commissioner Phillipson agreed and stated, “I see where you’re coming from. Do you feel more comfortable raising the license $5.00 instead of $10.00?”

Commissioner Patch stated, “It’s all about fairness. If people did not get the opportunity to provide input relative to the saltwater license increase at the public hearings than I am not comfortable going forward with it.”

The only positive thing I can see is that the average sportsmen would not object to a $5.00 increase to help the department.”

Commissioner Carr stated, “This was not part of the public hearing process, therefore, I do not feel right bringing it forward without an opportunity for the public to comment.”

At this time, Commissioner Phillipson withdrew his second to the motion to increase the saltwater license by $10.00.

Commissioner Baldwin moved to amend his motion to increase the saltwater license from $10.00 to $5.00 and Commissioner Phillipson seconded. The amendment carried with 5 in favor, 4 opposed, and 1 abstention.

The motion was defeated, therefore, no proposed increase to the saltwater license at this time.

Commissioner Greco moved to go forward with proposed changes to the license fee structure as presented and Commissioner Clews seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**
1.) Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, provided the monthly financial statement.

2.) Doug Grout provided an update on the proposed rules for Jonah crab.

**STANDING COMMITTEES:**

**POLICY COMMITTEE:** Commissioners; Commissioners McGonagle & Clews. Commissioner McGonagle reported that the committee did not meet.

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Morse, Chair; Commissioners Hubert, Greco, Patch, and Baldwin. Commissioner Morse reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting.

1.) Commissioner Morse moved to oppose HB-500, repealing the prohibition on the use of silencing devices for taking wildlife, and Commissioner McGonagle seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.
RIVERS COMMITTEE: Commissioner Ryan: Commissioner Ryan reported that the committee met on October 13, 2015. He reported that the next meeting would take place in January, 2016.

LAKES COMMITTEE: Commissioner Clews: Commissioner Clews reported that the Lakes Committee met on September 22, 2015.

AWARDS COMMITTEE: Commissioners Ryan and Morse. Commissioner Ryan reported that the committee did not meet and announced that the deadline to submit award nominations was December 31, 2015.

HANDBOOK & ORIENTATION COMMITTEE: Commissioner Patch, Chair; Commissioner Patch reported that the committee did not meet.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE: Commissioner Greco, Chair; Commissioners McGonagle, Tichy and Phillipson. Commissioner Greco reported that the committee finalized their report, which was given to Director Normandeau for review and are waiting to hear back from him.

WILDLIFE HERITAGE FOUNDATION: Commissioner Greco. Commissioner Greco reported that the Foundation would be meeting in November.

NEW BUSINESS:

OLD BUSINESS:

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS:
COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Commissioner Baldwin had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER CARR: Commissioner Carr reported that Kimberly Proulx, Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program Assistant, was giving a presentation at the Farmington Fish & Game Club and that folks were looking forward to it.

COMMISSIONER GRECO: Commissioner Greco had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPSON: Commissioner Phillipson had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER MORSE: Commissioner Morse had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER RYAN: Commissioner Ryan had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER PATCH: Commissioner Patch had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER MCGONAGLE: Commissioner McGonagle had nothing to report.

COMMISSIONER CLEWS: Commissioner Clews had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER HUBERT: Commissioner Hubert had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER TICHY: Commissioner Tichy had nothing to report at this time.
DIRECTOR’S REPORT:
Director Normandeau reported the Biennial Hearings would be held this year, most likely in the middle of December. He reported that he would e-mail the dates to the Commission.

He further reported that he would be out of the office during the upcoming weeks attending the Fall Director’s Meeting in Portsmouth, NH, the last week in October, and attending the Federal Grants Joint Task Force meeting in South Carolina November 15 – 17, 2015.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:
On behalf of the Guide’s Association, Dave Poole, thanked the Commission for their participation in the recent License Fee Hearings held across the State. He stated, “We appreciate the fact that the Commissioners put in the effort, it makes a difference.”

Krista Belanger, audience member, stated that she believed raising license fees should be across the board and felt by all hunters and fishermen.

At this time, 3:02p.m., Commissioner McGonagle moved to adjourn and Commissioner Ryan seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Respectfully submitted,

James Ryan, Secretary

Approved: _______________________

Ted Tichy, Chairman