

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

OCTOBER 12, 2021 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: Major Waldron's Sportsmen's Association, 339 Franklin Pierce Highway, Barrington, NH

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

Strafford County Commissioner position: vacant

Commissioners absent/excused: M. Lachance

Executive Director Mason – Present

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

ACTION ITEMS:

1.) Commissioner Green moved to approve the September 14, 2021 Commission Meeting Minutes, as written, and Commissioner Temple 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 Hodgdon moved to approve consent agenda items 2a.-2f., as presented below, and Commissioner Green seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2a.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$515.00 made in memory of Raymond Cerri Jr., Derry, NH:

Donations made to the Hunter Education Program:

- The Bradley Family, Windham, NH - \$100.00

Donations made to the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- Susan Gilbert, New York, NY - \$ 25.00
- Mitchell Gershonowitz, New York, NY - \$ 30.00
- Allen & Joyce Heidorn, Cromwell, CT - \$ 35.00
- Raymond & Judith Ouellette, Windham, NH - \$ 50.00
- Hans Jackson, Derry, NH - \$ 75.00
- Stephen & Susan Nawn, Bedford, NH - \$100.00

- Jim & Dove Falzone, Haverhill, MA - \$100.00
- Total: \$415.00

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of tackle & fishing equipment made to the “Let’s Go Fishing” Program, valued at \$500.00, from Leonard Stabile in memory of Walter Roth, who was an avid fishermen & “Let’s Go Fishing” Volunteer Instructor.

2c.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$550.00, made in memory of Alan M. Juza, to be deposited in the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- Soucy Electric, Manchester, NH - \$250.00
 - John Juza, Manchester, NH - \$250.00
 - Kinnicum Fish & Game, Candia, NH - \$ 50.00
- Total: \$550.00

2d.) The Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$100.00 from Shirley Jackson, Scarborough, ME, in memory of Carl Carlson, retired District One Sergeant, who recently passed away, to be deposited into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2e.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$675.00, made in memory of George Stokinger, to be deposited into the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- Chery Blauth, Cambridge, MA - \$ 50.00
 - Hampstead School District, Hampstead, NH - \$ 75.00
 - OVP Management, Inc., North Conway, NH - \$100.00
 - David & Paula Wehmeyer, Gorham, ME - \$100.00
 - Sharon Joyce/Michelle Auger/Kathie Dayotis, \$100.00
Seabrook, NH
 - OVP Management, Inc., Newton, MA - \$250.00
- Total: \$675.00

2f.) The Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$300.00 from Cheryle King, Noank, CT, in memory of Arthur Card, III, to be deposited into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

3.) Dan Bergeron, Game Programs Supervisor, came before the Commission on behalf of Jim Oehler, Habitat Program Supervisor, requesting approval to expend up to \$8,000 from the Wildlife Habitat Account to support two seasonal positions to assist with infrastructure, boundary line maintenance, and habitat work on Department owned Wildlife Management Areas during the spring/summer of 2022.

Much discussion ensued.

Commissioner Green moved to vote on the above request today and waive the 30-day informational period and Commissioner DeBow seconded.

Commissioner Green moved to approve expending up to \$8,000 from the Wildlife Habitat Account to support two seasonal positions to assist with infrastructure, boundary line maintenance, and habitat work on Department owned Wildlife Management Areas during the spring/summer of 2022 and Commissioner DeBow seconded.

A vote was taken on the motion to waive the 30-day informational period and was unanimous in the affirmative.

A vote was taken on the original motion to approve expending up to \$8,000 from the Wildlife Habitat Account to support two seasonal positions to assist with infrastructure, boundary line maintenance, and habitat work on Department owned Wildlife Management Areas during the spring/summer of 2022 and was unanimous in the affirmative.

4.) Dan Bergeron came before the Commission & provided input from the Wildlife Division relative to the petition submitted by the NH Wildlife Coalition relative to implementing mandatory reporting requirements for the taking of furbearing animals.

Dan reported that wildlife staff do not believe that mandatory reporting requirements for the taking of furbearing animals by hunting was warranted at this time. He reported that staff reached out to surrounding states, none of which require mandatory reporting of all hunter harvested furbearing species. He further reported that rules vary per state. He provided the following information to the Commission:

- Hunter harvests of many fur species is believed to be minimal and likely not as informative to population trends as Capture Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data the Department already collects from trappers. Review of fisher harvest data supports this based on the low average number of animals harvested by hunters over the last 8 years.
- The Department is currently assessing the efficacy of 3 different indices to fur population. This includes the historical CPUE data, 2 recently adopted hunter surveys (fall bow hunter and spring turkey surveys), and a new cooperative research project with UNH using remote cameras and track stations.
- Given the Department's limited resources, any potential monitoring efforts must be weighed against their likely ability to inform management decisions. In addition, given the Department is currently assessing 3 different fur indices, and that fur harvest would likely yield limited information, The Game Management Team did not believe mandatory permits & registration of all fur species was warranted at this time.

Commissioner Green reported that he would like to see more data collected to aid in the Commission's decision making. He inquired as to having more surveys to obtain additional data than what is already being collected.

After much discussion, Commissioner DeBow moved to deny the petition submitted by the NH Wildlife Coalition relative to implementing mandatory reporting requirements for the taking of furbearing animals and Commissioner Price seconded. The motion carried with 9 in favor 1 opposed (R. Green).

5.) Chairman Stohl announced that the Commission received a petition from Weldon Bosworth, on behalf of the NH Wildlife Coalition, relative to a rule change in reference to the take of wild passage Peregrine Falcons.

At this time, Commissioner Green moved to forward the petition to the Wildlife Division for review & input at the November 9, 2021 Commission Meeting and Commissioner Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1.) Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, came before the Commission and reviewed the financial statement & dedicated account balances and answered questions.

Commissioner Hodgdon thanked Kathy LaBonte for the extensive amount of work she put into compiling the dedicated account balances. He stated, "This information is very helpful and informative to everyone."

On behalf of the Commission, Chairman Stohl thanked Kathy, as well.

2.) Cheri Patterson, Chief, Marine Division, updated the Commission on the following:

- Black Sea Bass rule change to allow a directed commercial fishery that meets the requirements of the ASMFC (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission) Black Sea Bass Fishery Management.
- Restoration closure to oyster harvest in the area around Nannie Island to continue the restoration efforts in the Great Bay area. This restoration closure is being considered as a current restoration closed area adjacent to Nannie Island opens in November.

LATE ITEMS:

1.) Colonel Jordan, Chief, Law Enforcement Division, came before the Commission requesting acceptance of the donation of a 35-foot safe boat made to the Law Enforcement Division from George Wells, who has a home in Walpole, NH.

Colonel Jordan reported that the boat is designed for ocean patrol and is equipped with four outboard motors. This donation will replace the current 17- year old, 27- foot safe boat and is valued at \$1.5 million dollars when purchased new.

Commissioner Temple moved to accept the donation of a 35-foot safe boat made to the Law Enforcement Division from George Wells, Walpole, NH, and Commissioner McInnis seconded.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Price moved to make this an action, to be voted on today, and Commissioner Hodgson seconded.

A vote was taken to make this an action item, to be voted on today, and was unanimous in the affirmative.

A vote was taken on the original motion to accept the donation of a 35-foot safe boat made to the Law Enforcement Division from George Wells, Walpole, NH, and was unanimous in the affirmative.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

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

Commissioner Green reported that the language to LSR's would be coming out in the very near future. He reported that he was told that the Senate was advised to keep bills submitted down to a minimum.

He further reported that he felt the weekly legislative committee meetings via Microsoft teams was very helpful in keeping everyone updated. He inquired with Director Mason as to whether that option would still be available for meetings. Director Mason responded that he would look into it and get back to the Commission.

Commissioner Green, Chair; Commissioners: DeBow, Price & Hodgson
Staff members: Paul Sanderson & Kevin Jordan

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: Commission professional development, education & policy recommendations related to Commission conduct & activities. No report.

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

SUSTAINABILITY & STRATEGIC PLANNING: Agency funding, development & oversight of strategic plan. No report.

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

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

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

Commissioner Temple reported that this committee would be meeting in the near future.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION: Engagement, partnership, awards, public recognition & education strategies for the public & interest groups. No report.

Commissioner DeBow, Chair; Commissioners: Hodgdon & Price.
Staff members: Nicola Whitley & Dianne Timmins.

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 Hodgson reported that she volunteered to assist with duck banding activities within the Wildlife Division, as she has for the past 15 years, and that her husband & daughter assisted, as well. She reported that her daughter is now an expert at identifying a female duck from a male.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: The Director will report on recent department activities. This is an information item only.

Director Mason reported that the Biennial Report has been submitted to the Governor & Council. He reported that he would get copies to the Commission in the near future.

He reported that he attended the Androscoggin Valley Fish & Game Club Banquet, along with Mark Beauchesne, Landowner Relations & Outreach Coordinator, and Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries Division. He further reported that Mark Beauchesne was presented with their Sportsmen's of the Year Award at that banquet.

He further reported that he attended the Law Enforcement Awards Ceremony at F&G HQ on September 18, 2021.

Director Mason reported that he was feeling under the weather having COVID & a bacterial infection, therefore, was not able to attend the North Woods Law Throw-down charity softball game against the Maine Conservation Officers. He congratulated the NH Conservation Officers on their win.

In addition, Director Mason reported that Paul Sanderson, Legal Coordinator, has recently retired and his position has been advertised/posted.

He further reported that Tim Buzinski, Chief, Facilities & Lands Bureau, will also be leaving the department, and reported that his position would be advertised in the very near future, as well.

He reported that the Wildlife Division Chief job description is on the agenda to be approved by Governor & Council at their meeting tomorrow, October 13, 2021.

He reported that he would be participating in the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies - Director's meeting, a 3-day zoom meeting, from October 25 - 27th.

In closing, he reported that the Department would be storing equipment at the Lancaster Armory, making it much easier for staff, not having to haul equipment back & forth to the North Country.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Weldon Bosworth, Gilford, NH:

Weldon commented on the stripe sea bass rule change and the change in the environment & how it has affected that species since the 70/80's.

He further stated that he was disappointed, although not surprised, by the rejection of the petition without any back & forth discussion. He reported that it was the Commissions responsibility to not only maximize hunting & fishing opportunities, however, to also be the stewards of a healthy ecosystem, such as coyote, and others, like skunk & raccoon, as they have the greatest influence on the ecosystem. He stated, "I suggest a rejection of a petition should be based on more than what I heard today." I am disappointed that you will not look into it further & have back & forth discussion, thus, the next step is to wait for the biennial rulemaking period."

In closing, he reported that he felt there should be a better process in place to address petitions.

Kristina Snyder, Chester, NH:

Kristina reported that some information came to her regarding the behavior of one of the Commissioners. She reported that it was mentioned that Commissioner DeBow told a member of the House Fish, Game & Marine Resources Committee that Weldon Bosworth was behind the orientation of certain legislation (HB-117), in order to get on the Fish & Game Commission. She reported that she believes he has told other parties, as well. She stated, "To the best of my knowledge, that accusation is not true, and I think it is wrong that Commissioner DeBow had private discussions with committee members, as it could possibly influence the committee member's legislative decision making."

Commissioner Green inquired if Kristina was making a formal complaint against a Commissioner?

Kristina responded that she was verbalizing the information and making it public knowledge, as she felt it poses ethical questions.

She further reported that Andy Timmins, Bear Project Leader, drove to Chester, NH, from Littleton, NH, to attend the Chester Town Fair, where he manned a table with a variety of literature, from protecting poultry & crops, to fencing information & recommendations. She reported that it was an incredible effort on his part, and was well received by everyone. She reported that Andy left her with additional literature so she would have it on hand for others interested.

At this time, 2:57 p.m., Commissioner DeBow moved to adjourn and Commissioner Hodgdon seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Eric Stohl, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission