

# RIPPLE EFFECT

RESOURCES MANAGED BY FISH AND GAME BRING JOBS,  
INCOME AND TOURIST DOLLARS TO THE GRANITE STATE

| BY LINDA KIRK |

Sometimes even a seasoned and self-described “lobster farmer” will get stumped by what he pulls up in his traps.

“Every time I see a weird fish, I call Josh and he gets me the answer,” says Damon Frampton, who has been lobstering in the waters of New Hampshire for more than 20 years.

Frampton is referring to New Hampshire Fish and Game Department marine biologist Joshua Carloni. When Carloni is not identifying odd fish, he’s climbing aboard Frampton’s boat in Portsmouth to collect data on lobsters, information that he and biologists from neighboring states use in population assessments to help guide management.

“I’ll throw all the lobsters out on the table, and he measures them, sexes them, and sees if they are soft or hard. One day a month, he does all the lobsters on my boat. Some days it could be 500 lobsters, and some days it could be 3,000, but Josh measures every one of them,” says Frampton. “Fish and Game are wonderful allies for me and the work I do.”

## Economic Engine

Ensuring that lobster harvests comply with the laws is just one of many jobs that fall under N.H. Fish and Game’s umbrella and reap positive benefits for New Hampshire’s economy and quality of life. Commercial landings of lobster in New Hampshire in 2013 brought \$16.6 million into the state.

From studying oyster beds in Durham to collaring moose in Dummer, Fish and Game is responsible for a wide variety of tasks that strive to ensure that fish and wildlife have ideal habitat and healthy populations. It takes time, funding and highly skilled labor to do this work, but the investment pays off. A 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey found that more than \$556 million is spent each year in the Granite State by hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers. The economic benefits don’t stop there, as Fish and Game also builds boat ramps, patrols snowmobile trails, rescues hikers and helps farmers deal with nuisance wildlife.

Will Fish and Game be able to keep that economic engine humming? Without adequate funding, it won’t be easy.

“Right now we’re faced with a deficit of close to \$3 million a year,” says Fish and Game Executive Director Glenn Normandeau. “We’ve had to deplete the balance in the Fish and Game Fund to keep services at the same level.”

Because Fish and Game receives most of its funding through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and sources such as the federal excise tax on hunting- and fishing-related equipment, it would seem that the root of the problem must be that hunting and fishing has decreased in the state. But that isn’t true.

“Over the last 12 years, hunting participation has been steady, and there’s even been a slight uptick in fishing. But these licenses are fixed fees that are set by the

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*“We have a good quality of life in New Hampshire, and healthy fish and wildlife populations are an important part of that – we’re the guardians of that resource.”*

*~ Glenn Normandeau*

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New Hampshire lobsterman Damon Frampton relies on the N.H. Fish and Game Department to manage the resource that supports his livelihood. Lobstering brings \$16.6 million in economic activity to New Hampshire annually.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOSH CARLONI

State Legislature, and the last time we had a fee increase was about 12 years ago,” explains Normandeau. “So it really is the increasing costs of doing the work that has led to the shortfall.”

The situation proved so dire that the Legislature stepped in and allocated funding to keep the department solvent through June 2015. Unless license fees are raised or additional monies are secured from the General Fund or other sources, Normandeau says that July 2015 could mark the beginning of significant cutbacks. The impact would be felt from the lobster fleet on the coast to North Country hamlets like Millsfield, a town of just 23 people in Coos County.

“People are drawn to the beauty of the North Country. In October, I had folks come from the United Kingdom, Jerusalem, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands for the foliage,” says Sonja Sheldon, co-owner of A Piece of Heaven Bed and Breakfast in Millsfield.

“Then there’s the ATVing and the snowmobiling; we have direct access from our door to the Ride the Wilds trails. Then there’s the deer and turkey hunting. And people go fishing on the Connecticut and Androscoggin rivers and at Lake Umbagog. You can do all of it up here – it’s why people come.”

And then there’s the moose.

“Sometimes one of the first things people say to me when they check in is, ‘Where do we go to see moose?’” says Sheldon. That’s when she calls Keith Roberge of

Northern NH Guide Services of Gorham. Recently Sheldon had a family of four from New York who were quite intent on seeing moose, so Roberge was called in to make that a reality.

“They had a photographer with them and told me that the dad was writing for a newspaper. I didn’t think much about it; I was more focused on finding them a moose. The next thing I know, there’s a story about me and that family in the *New York Times* Travel Section, and my phone is ringing off the hook with folks who want to come up to see moose and to learn more about hunting up here,” says Roberge.

## Lifeblood for Local Business

The trails used by Roberge and All-Terrain Vehicle riders, snowmobilers, hikers and cross-country skiers are the lifeblood of the many mom-and-pop restaurants, stores, hotels and other locally owned businesses in Coos County. Plentiful fish for anglers to pursue, thanks to the efforts of Fish and Game biologists and hatcheries, are another big draw.

“In the North Country, we are pretty much tourist dependent, because there’s very little industry or mills up here now,” explains Angus Boezeman, a fly-fishing guide with 25 years of experience, who works at Tall Timber Lodge in Pittsburg. “The Connecticut

River is considered to be premier fishing and is a definite destination, because it has cool water temperatures all year and constant flow. All of my clients are very serious about fishing.”

A couple of years ago, Boezeman met someone who would become one of his most dedicated anglers.

“I saw a kid on the river who was a good little fisherman. So I came over to him and told him to keep up the good work. Then over the winter, I started getting these e-mails from someone who was really adamant about fishing with me,” says Boezeman. “When the time came for me to go fishing with this guy, it ends up being that 14-year-old kid I had complimented. His dad told me his son had worked all winter long shoveling snow and saved every penny to hire me for a half-day, just so I could teach him how to fish the river.”

The Lakes Region is another part of New Hampshire that cultivates

tourism year-round. Visitors come from as far as New York’s Little Italy, as nearby as Boston’s Italian North End, or sometimes all the way from the Old Country.

“There was a family of 15 from Italy – ranging in age from 12 to 50 – who were skiing in New Hampshire, but then they wanted to try something new, so they contacted me,” explains Tim Moore, a fishing and hunting guide based out of Greenland who does about four guided trips a week on the big lake. “I drove them onto Lake Winnepesaukee on snowmo-

biles to the ice fishing shelter, got them set up with tip-ups and jigs, and they had a blast catching lake trout and smallmouth.”

Economic rewards aren’t just realized by guides like Moore and Boezeman. Those who work behind the counter selling outdoor equipment are part of the equation, too.

“Our economic survival relies on the hunters and anglers in the state,” says Judy Wadleigh of Wildlife Taxidermy and Sport Center in Manchester. “People have been shopping here for generations, because customer service and sharing knowledge is our goal. Deer and turkey hunting are huge for us.”

## Watching Wildlife

According to Director Normandeau, dynamic wildlife management is the key to outdoor opportunities and the business they create in the state.

“Compare what we have today to 50 years ago – there were no bears south of the White Mountains and no moose or turkeys anywhere in the state,” says Normandeau. “It’s really a different world now. But people get used to it and think this is what it was always like. However, it took a lot of effort to get to where we are today. We need support so we can stay on that right path.”



Fly-fishing guide Angus Boezeman is one of many New Hampshire residents whose business depends on wildlife-associated recreation.

COURTESY PHOTO



The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department supports wildlife-associated recreation that contributes \$556 million in expenditures to New Hampshire's economy, according to the 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Of this total, hunters and anglers spent \$275 million, while wildlife watchers spent \$281 million. Off-highway Recreational Vehicle enthusiasts add another big economic boost in New Hampshire's North Country and throughout the state.



That right path also enhances the quality of life for folks like Robert Hodgman of Epping.

“Ever since we moved here five years ago, we’ve been going on hikes to find waterfalls. My wife and my sons and I are on a mission to visit all of them in the state,” says Hodgman.

Since setting that goal, the Hodgman family has become amateur botanists, ornithologists and even lepidopterists.

“It’s now a running joke in our family about how many caterpillars we’ll find. There are times where the boys don’t want to get too close to the waterfall and get wet, but instead will be looking for caterpillars and butterflies,” says Hodgman.

Hodgman’s sons are not alone when it comes to looking for wildlife in New Hampshire. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife,

approximately 600,000 people each year do some form of wildlife viewing in the Granite State. From a Japanese tourist on a North Country moose tour to a grandmother in Walpole filling up her backyard birdfeeder, wildlife watchers in the state spend around \$280 million on the pastime, and the numbers continue to grow.

“For the first time, we’re seeing the economic value of wildlife watching exceeding the value of hunting and fishing combined,” says Normandeau. “We have a good quality of life in New Hampshire, and healthy fish and wildlife populations are an important part of that – we’re the guardians of that resource.”

*Linda Kirk is a free-lance writer based in Portsmouth, N.H.*