

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

OCTOBER 15, 2024 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

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

Commissioners Present: R. Green, P. DeBow, B. Temple, E. Stohl, J. Titone, J. Caveney, P. McGonagle, & A.J. DeRosa.

Commissioners absent/excused: C. Hodgdon

Carroll County Commissioner seat: vacant

Rockingham County Commissioner seat: vacant

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman R. Green called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. 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 September 17, 2024 Commission Minutes, as written, and Commissioner P. DeBow 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 B. Temple moved to accept consent agenda items 2a & 2i, as presented below, and Commissioner A. J. DeRosa seconded.

2a.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$5,150.00 made to the Search & Rescue Account:

Paul Bisset -	\$5,000.00
John Collins -	\$ 100.00
Maureen Greenberg -	<u>\$ 50.00</u>
Total:	\$5,150.00

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$650.00 from the Nash Stream Camp Owners Association, for deposit into the Operation Game Thief Account.

- 2c.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$25.00 from Three Rivers Stocking Association, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account, for use by the Inland Fisheries Division.
- 2d.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$1,000 from the Ruffed Grouse Society, to be used as match for a habitat project at the Danbury Bog Wildlife Management Area to benefit grouse.
- 2e.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from the NH Trappers Association, for use by the Wildlife Division for furbearer management.
- 2f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$200.00 from the Quincy Bog Natural Area/Pemi-Baker Land Trust, for use by the Wildlife Division for bear management.
- 2g.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from the Gilford Public Library, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.
- 2h.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from North Star Education Services, LLC, Bedford, NH, in memory of John L. Forrestall, Concord, NH, for deposit in to the Small Gifts & Donations Account.
- 2i.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$75.00 from Sharon Fanger, Lebanon, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

- 1.) Financial Statement – Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division – there were no questions on the financial statements.
- 2.) Dorice McCullough, IT Lead, DoIT (Department of Information Technology), came before the Commission and provided an overview of the agency’s IT Plan.
(<https://mm.nh.gov/files/uploads/doit/documents/fish-and-game-department-it-plan-26-27.pdf>)

Chairman R. Green thanked Dorice for the update.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

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

Commissioner Stohl, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & McGonagle.

Staff members: Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that the committee did not meet.

Chairman R. Green announced that Commissioner A.J. DeRosa would be added to the Legislative Committee, effective immediately, replacing Commissioner P. DeBow.

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

Commissioner Hodgson, Chair; Commissioners: Temple, Caveney & Titone.
Staff member: Cheri Patterson.

Chairman R. Green reported that the committee did not meet.

He further announced that Commissioner A.J. DeRosa would be taking over as Chair of this committee, effective immediately, replacing Commissioner M. Hodgson.

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

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

Chairman R. Green reported that that the committee did not meet.

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that the committee did not meet, as they did not receive the feedback/comments from the incoming Director regarding the Strategic Plan.

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

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

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee would be meeting immediately following the adjournment of the Commission Meeting.

Chairman R. Green announced that he was adding Commissioner P. McGonagle to this committee, effective immediately.

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 did not meet, as they could not obtain a quorum.

Chairman R. Green announced that he was adding Commissioner P. McGonagle to this committee, effective immediately, replacing Commissioner M. Hodgson.

SEACOAST REPORT: Commissioner J. Titone.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that American Lobster Board held a public hearing on September 23, 2024, to consider postponing the implementation of the lobster gauge increase to July 1, 2025, instead of January 1, 2025. The board determined that by postponing the implementation of the lobster gauge increase to July 1, 2025, negative impacts to U.S. and Canadian lobster industries in 2025 would be reduced and Canada would have more time to consider applying the same regulations as the U.S. lobster fishery.

LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner P. McGonagle.

Chairman R. Green reported that the paperwork for Commissioner P. McGonagle to represent the Commission and serve on this committee was still going through the approval process.

Commissioner P. McGonagle reported that he has been receiving some information from the Watershed Manager. He further reported that the committee would be meeting next in January of 2025.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner C. Hodgdon.

Chairman R. Green reported that the committee did not meet.

He further reported that Commissioner C. Hodgdon's paperwork to continue serving as the Commission's representative on this committee was awaiting the approval process, as well.

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

Chairman R. Green reported that the Search Committee had been sunset.

OLD BUSINESS: Commissioner E. Stohl moved to approve the 7 below legislative proposals and Commissioner P. McGonagle seconded:

1. **Boat Access** – update language in RSA 233-A: 13 to refer to “decal fee”, per Chapter 125, [HB 1304-FN-L](#), Laws of 2024, and designate funds are solely for Boat Access program.
2. **Guide Apprenticeship** – new Section RSA 215:10, establishes new Apprentice Guide Licenses and requirements that mirror the apprentice hunting licenses (see [RSA 214:23-a](#)), fees to be set in rules.
3. **“Housekeeping” Bill** – fixes, updates, or simplifications to 5 statutes:

2-1. CT River Atlantic Salmon Commission – Repeal RSA 213-A as Federal law sunset in Oct. 2023 (have language);

2-2. Drop nets – remove “brook” in reference to trout in RSA 211:9, to be consistent with new “trout” definition per Chapter 48, [HB 241](#), Laws of 2022;

2-3. Fisheries Habitat Fee – remove amount from RSA 214:1-g and place in rule, to be consistent with how Wildlife Habitat Fee is managed; and

2-4. Published notice for biennium public meetings – clarify the newspaper notices mandated by RSA 206:11 may be digital.

2-5. Shooting crippled/injured waterfowl – add new paragraph V to RSA 207:7 that allows shooting crippled waterfowl from motorboats only in the sea duck area and only during season {now allowed by 50 CFR §20.21(e)}.

4. **Major Projects** – increase value of department projects in RSA 21-I:80,I to \$1 million – [National Guard](#) to take lead on this and add additional language pertinent to their specific needs. This will be their bill, but with our support.

5. **Marine Habitat Fee Established** – new Section RSA 214:1-h establishes account to mirror

6. **Non-Game Account** – add language to RSA 212-B:6, I that allows for funds to be invested and interest accrued to this account.

7. **Repeat Poaching Offenders** – add language to: increase fine penalties (RSA 207:55, I), include revocation or suspension of licenses (RSA 214:19), and add jail time (RSA 213:47).

The vote to approve the seven legislative proposals was unanimous in the affirmative.

Chairman R. Green referred to the housekeeping bills, item #4, public notice on public hearings, and asked that the sentence “The Executive Director may in *his* discretion” be changed to *their or his/her* discretion.

Marty Mobley, Legal Coordinator, agreed to make that change.

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the North American Grasslands Act was reintroduced into congress again this week. He reported that he wanted to get it on the Commission’s radar, as it could potentially be something the Department should look into and how it could affect the Department, as it relates to a great deal of habit monies for monarch and butterfly work.

Chairman R. Green asked that Commissioner A.J. DeRosa bring it before the Legislative Committee for discussion.

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 E. Stohl reported that this could be Director Mason's last Commission Meeting as Executive Director, as he was not sure of the incoming Director's start date. He thanked Director Mason for his leadership over the last 4 years and wished him luck in his future endeavors.

Chairman R. Green reported that he has spoken with the new incoming Director and reported that she is planning to start on November 1st."

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that he recently attended a CT Lakes Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting in Pittsburg, NH, with Director Mason. He reported that it was another contentious meeting regarding the proposed extension of the ATV season on the CT Lakes Headwaters Tract. He reported that the Advisory Committee itself, met with the public on the proposed extension of the ATV season. He thanked the Commission for voting unanimously to oppose the extension of the ATV season on the CT Lakes Headwaters, as do the people of the Town of Pittsburg for doing that. He stated, "There has been two weeks of silence up there."

He further reported that Commissioner Stewart of DNCR (Department of Natural & Cultural Resources) listened to all the comments and decided not to extend the season. He again thanked the Commission for taking a position on the issue.

In closing, he commended Colonel Jordan for the excellent coordination & organization of Conservation Officer Levi Frye's funeral service. He stated "I was never so impressed with a Fish & Game organized service for one of their own."

Commissioner B. Temple acknowledged & thanked staff for improvements made for fishing access on the CT River.

He further reported that the Old #4 Sportsmen's Club was in the process of making improvements to their rifle range & pistol range.

Commissioner P. DeBow thanked everyone that served with him on the Commission. He stated that it was fun and educational. He also thanked staff and stated, "You guys are excellent and I had a great experience here!"

He reported that Dave Poole, Rumney, NH, resident and fly fishermen, would be replacing him as Grafton County Commissioner and was confident he would do a great job.

On behalf of the Commission, Commissioner E. Stohl thanked Commissioner P. DeBow for his service on the Commission.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Director Mason thanked Commissioner Stewart of DNCR for not extending the ATV season on the CT Lakes Headwaters Tract.

He thanked everyone who attended Conservation Officer Levi Frye’s funeral service and reported that there was approximately 400 people in attendance, which is a tribute to his service and his life.

He further reported that this afternoon would be the 4th meeting of the Fish & Game Funding Study Committee. He reported that there seems to be some support amongst committee members to increase funding levels for the Department. The last meeting of the committee will take place on October 24th, with a report due November 1, 2024.

In addition, he reported that the contract for the contract manager for the company in charge of constructing the new hatchery will be voted on at the October 30, 2024 Governor & Council Meeting.

In closing, he thanked the Commission and staff and stated, “It has been a pleasure working with all of you during my tenure as Executive Director. I wish you luck in the future.”

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Kristina Snyder, Chester, NH, stated that she was wearing black today, as it was a sad day, the opening of the trapping season. She stated, “As many of you know, I really work hard to stop what I consider to be animal cruelty. She stated that she was disappointed in the agency for continually putting out propaganda regarding trapping and would never apologize for being against trapping.

She asked the Commission to please be equal to everyone. She stated that she has been attending Commission Meetings for ten years and has not seen any positive change for animals, except for nongame, and felt that needed to change.

At 1:45 p.m., Commissioner E. Stohl moved to adjourn and Commissioner J. Caveney. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Ray Green, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission