

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

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

Commissioners Present: R. Green, C. Hodgdon, M. Hodgson, B. Temple, E. Stohl, J. Titone, J. Caveney, P. McGonagle, & A.J. DeRosa.

Carroll County Commissioner seat: vacant

Commissioners absent/excused: P. DeBow

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 August 20, 2024 Commission Minutes, as written, and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote carried with 9 in favor, 1 abstention (M. Hodgson), as she was absent from the August 20, 2024 Commission Meeting.

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 C. Hodgdon moved to accept consent agenda items 2a & 2b, as presented below, and Commissioner A. J. DeRosa seconded.

2a.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$250.00 from Dennis Fiorillo, for use by the Department's Advanced Search & Rescue Team.

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from Parke Sickler in memory of Mark Lamothe, for use by the Department's Advanced Search & Rescue Team.

The vote to accept consent agenda items 2a & 2b was unanimous in the affirmative.

3.) Cory Riley, Manager, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, came before the Commission seeking approval to accept the donation of \$97,041.00 from the Great Bay Stewards to provide the non-federal match for a supplemental grant to complete the Glenn Cove Project.

Cory reported that she was happy to be able to show some of the Commission members the Glenn Cove Project after last month's Commission Meeting at the Great Bay Discovery Center.

She reported that with the donation of \$97,041.00 from the Great Bay Stewards, the department is leveraging approximately \$670,000 in federal funding. She further reported that items previously removed from the current contract could now be completed.

1. Finishing site work & paving.
2. Building a garage.
3. Moving a cottage from one piece of the property to another.

She emphasized that this was time-sensitive, as they would like the paving to be completed prior to the winter months.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to accept the donation of \$97,041.00 from the Great Bay Stewards to provide the non-federal match for a supplemental grant to complete the Glenn Cove Project and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Cory thanked the Commission for accepting the donation.

- 4.) Commissioner E. Stohl moved to accept the donation of an Electric-E-Bike for use by the Fish & Game Law Enforcement Division, District 1, valued at approximately \$1,700.00 and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

This donation will improve the efficiency and the ability to access remote areas with very little physical impact and minimal noise pollution.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

- 1.) Financial Statement – Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, reported that a great deal of her time has been spent on compiling the Department's budget.

She reported that she hoped to have the August & September Financial Statements to the Commission in the near future.

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 met the morning of the Commission Meeting.

He reported that the committee voted unanimously to support the following:

Fis 603.06 – Saltwater Smelt
Fis 603.24 – Possession Exceeding Daily Limit
Fis 400 – Various Expiring Sections of Inland Fisheries

At this time, Commissioner E. Stohl moved that it be on record that the Commission supports all three rules and Commissioner P. McGonagle seconded.

Commissioner Stohl presented the 7 Draft proposals for 2025 legislation as follows:

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 sunsetted 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).

After discussion, Commissioner M. Hodgson suggested amending 207:55, section IV, to add the word “restitution”.

Director Mason spoke to the fine & penalties for first time hunters who may get caught up in this and pay a huge fine and as a result, quit the sport.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon suggested changing the word “may” to “shall” under the boat access rules.

Commissioner E. Stohl moved to approve the recommended changes to the legislative proposals and Commissioner C. Hodgdon seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Marty Mobley, Legal Coordinator reported that she would make those changes.

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

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

Commissioner M. Hodgson reported that the committee did not meet.

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 reported that the committee met yesterday, September 16 2024, at F&G HQ. He thanked Colonel Jordan & Director Mason for participating. He distributed a document to the Commission and reported that the changes made were a result of feedback from Commissioners and Senior Staff. He reported that the goals were highlighted in black and the red bullets were success strategies from action items to acquire the goals.

He reported that he would like to ask for support to bring the document before the new Executive Director for comment before finalizing anything.

The Commission agreed to have the document reviewed by the incoming Executive Director, prior to finalizing.

Commissioner E. Stohl commended Commissioner C. Hodgdon for the extensive work that he has put into this document. He stated, “It was like herding cats to get us to reply to all

your emails, and I know I wasn't the best at responding immediately. You have put a great deal of time into this and have done a great job!"

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 did not meet. He reported that the committee would be meeting in October.

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. He reported that the committee would be meeting in October to finalize the Commission Awards.

SEACOAST REPORT: Commissioner J. Titone.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that The Department of Interior announced that it would hold an auction of leases for offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine to be held on October 29, 2024. He further reported that the auction was for 8 lease areas covering approximately 2 million acres of the Gulf of Maine.

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 going through the process and he was still awaiting confirmation.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner C. Hodgdon.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that the committee did not meet.

Chairman R. Green inquired if Commissioner C. Hodgdon was interested in continuing to serve as the Commission's representative on this committee.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon agreed to continue to serve on this committee.

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

Commissioner M. Hodgson reported that the search for a new Executive Director was complete. She reported that the new Executive Director had been voted on and approved by the Governor & Executive Council.

She thanked the Search Committee for the extensive time and effort they put in.

At this time, she moved to sunset the Search Committee until further notice and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded.

After much discussion, Commissioner E. Stohl stated, "I think we should hold off on sunsetting the search committee, as the new Executive Director is not here yet."

Commissioner M. Hodgson withdrew her motion to sunset the Search Committee.

Commissioner E. Stohl withdrew his second to the motion.

Commissioner M. Hodgson moved to add to the Commission's Policies, an Executive Director Search Committee, under committee structure, and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

OLD BUSINESS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS: Chairman R. Green reported that he appointed Commissioner A.J. DeRosa to serve on the Legislative Committee as of today.

Commissioner M. Hodgson reported that this was her last Commission Meeting, as she has resigned from the Commission, effective September 24, 2024. She stated, "I love this Department." She reported that this was a very difficult decision for her, as she enjoyed serving on the Commission and her involvement with staff and serving her constituents. She stated that she has a lot to balance with her career and her young daughter, and felt she could not dedicate the appropriate amount of time to the position. She thanked everyone for everything throughout her tenure.

Commissioner E. Stohl thanked Commissioner M. Hodgson for her service on the Commission.

The board thanked Commissioner M. Hodgson for her contributions.

Chairman R. Green reported that with Commissioner M. Hodgson's resignation from the Commission, it leaves the Vice Chair position open. He reported that he solicited the Commission with only 1 Commissioner interested in being Vice Chair, Commissioner A.J. DeRosa.

At this time, Commissioner M. Hodgson moved that Commissioner A.J. DeRosa replace her as Vice Chairman on the Commission and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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 he recently attended a CT Lakes Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting in Pittsburg, NH, with Director Mason. He reported that it was a contentious meeting regarding the proposed extension of the ATV season on the CT Lakes Headwaters Tract. He reported that he was the co-sponsor of the legislation to set up a tract in the North Country. He explained that the CT Lakes Citizens Advisory Committee had been established to advise the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources on how the tract should be best managed.

In closing, he reported that the committee voted 6 to 3 opposing the extended ATV season.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that he participated in a webinar for “On-demand or Ropeless Fishing.”

He reported that The Mitre Corporation and NOAA (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration) hosted the webinar on the status of research into ropeless fishing in fixed gear fisheries. The purpose of ropeless fishing is to eliminate vertical lines in order to reduce the risk of whale entanglements.

He reported on the following key takeaways:

- So far, with the limited number of vessels testing this technology, there has been an 83% success rate in haulbacks. The 17% of unsuccessful hauls has led to ghost gear concerns.
- Ropeless fishing has not yet been demonstrated at scale in high gear density areas. There is the probability of gear conflicts in high-density gear areas.
- There is an unknown effect on marine life from acoustic emissions emitted from electronic retrieval devices.
- Different ocean conditions can affect acoustic signals in retrieving fishing gear.
- Technical complexity in this technology is a concern for the cost to end users.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Director Mason reported that he has been held-over as Executive Director until October 31, 2024.

He reported that the Department has withdrawn the trout rule changes and would continue to work with all of our constituencies to match our rule proposals with current management practices, science and the social needs of the constituency.

He further reported that he recently attended the CT Lakes Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting regarding the proposal to lengthen the ATV season on the CT Lakes Headwaters Tract. As Commissioner E. Stohl reported, the committee voted it down 6 to 3.

In addition, Director Mason reported that he recently learned that that Representative Ouellet, of Colebrook, NH, has filed a bill to extend the ATV season on the CT Lakes Headwaters Tract to Columbus Day.

Further, he reported that he attended the Fish & Game Funding Study Committee, along with Commissioner R. Green, who did a good job. Following the meeting, Colonel Jordan was interviewed by Channel 9, in addition to several newspaper articles regarding the issue. He reported that this was the first time that the department has made traction in the press regarding our attempt to obtain general funding.

Director Mason provided the Commission with an article that was published in In-Depth Magazine, where both candidates running for Governor were interviewed and expressed support for finding funding for the Fish & Game Department. He reported that the next Funding Committee Meeting would take place on September 19, 2024.

He further reported that NH would be hosting the NEAFWA (Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies) Annual Meeting next fall at the Omni Mount Washington Resort, in Bretton Woods, NH.

In closing, he reported that there have been some issues with the roof replacement at HQ and it is on hold. He reported that the scope of work has changed, as the insulation under the roof no longer meets code, which was not been factored into the bid. The Department is working with the Department of Public Works and The Capital Budget Oversight Committee to see what the Department's options are.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Robert Wolfchuck, Brentwood, NH (Rockingham County), reported that the Three Rivers Stocking Group was very disappointed to hear Commissioner Hodgson was resigning. He thanked her for all her time and stated that they appreciate her efforts for what she has done for Rockingham County.

He further thanked Director Mason for postponing the fishing regulation changes and for the Commission's support. He stated that he was happy to hear Director Mason say that he was looking forward to working with the different constituencies on the rule changes. He stated, "I

think it's important to possibly have a diverse working group created to help develop these changes."

In closing, he stated, "As it relates to the department's financial situation, I think the different user groups that use the resources could be effective with politicians & outreach, and could communicate this information at their meetings, platforms, and work together to solve the financial challenges the department faces, as we are all the beneficiaries."

Dave Poole, Rumney, NH, inquired about the Fis changes reviewed today and reported that he has been caught twice now by re-adoption that actually included rule changes. He inquired if when the changes are readopted if it included any season or bag limit changes.

Larry Davis, Rochester, NH, inquired as to the status of the Powdermill Fish Hatchery in New Durham, NH.

Director Mason responded that Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries, would discuss the status with Mr. Davis at the adjournment of the meeting.

Linda Dionne, Raymond, NH, commended Chairman R. Green on the revisiting and enhancing the poaching bill.

She reported that she was sorry to learn of Commissioner Hodgson's resignation and thanked her for her service. She stated that she was pleased to see that Commissioner DeRosa was replacing her as Vice Chair.

She further inquired if anyone had read a letter written by John Litvitus regarding the department's need for additional funding, it also states that the majority of the people in New Hampshire are not being represented on the Fish & Game Commission, as one of the qualifications is to hold a hunting & fishing license for a certain length of time.

In addition, Linda asked the Commission to address pheasant stocking and to consider stopping it, as a method of saving money. She reported that she was aware that pheasant hunters pay for the birds, however, the department pays for all other overhead costs, such as staff time, etc.

In closing, she stated, "It was a nice meeting."

At 2:21 p.m., Commissioner E. Stohl moved to adjourn and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Ray Green, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission