

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

NOVEMBER 19, 2024 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

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

Commissioners Present: R. Green, B. Temple, E. Stohl, J. Titone, J. Caveney, P. McGonagle, G. Chandler, D. Poole & A.J. DeRosa.

Commissioners absent/excused: C. Hodgdon

Rockingham County Commissioner seat: vacant

Executive Director Simek – 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.

On behalf of the Commission, Chairman R. Green welcomed Dr. Stephanie Simek to the NH Fish and Game Department and announced that Stephanie was the new Executive Director.

He further welcomed Gene Chandler, Carroll County Commissioner and Dave Poole, Grafton County Commissioner to the Fish & Game Commission.

At this time, Commissioner R. Green reported the passing of former Carroll County Commissioner, Robert Rowan. He reported that Bob was a big supporter of the agency, especially Barry Conservation Camp and educating young people to enjoy New Hampshire's outdoors. He reported that Bob died at home after a brief illness and that there were no services scheduled at this time.

ACTION ITEMS:

1.) Commissioner E. Stohl moved to approve the October 15, 2024 Commission Minutes, as written, and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa 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 & 2k, as presented below, and Commissioner A. J. DeRosa seconded.

2a.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from Richard Thibodeau, Bath, NH, in memory of Ray LeBlanc, Jaffrey, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from Bill & Eileen Carney, Bow, NH, in memory of Todd Baldwin, Thornton, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2c.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from Jennifer Jackson-Baro, Canterbury, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2d.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$20.00 from Stephen Shultz, Lynn, MA, due to overpayment on a nonresident snowmobile registration, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2e.) The Commission accepted the donation of .50 cents from Tyler Rodgers, Merrimack, NH, for overpayment on an Apprentice Hunting License, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$2,000 from the NH Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account, for use by the Wildlife Division.

2g.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$1,000 from the Granite State Whitetails, to purchase up to six cellular cameras.

2h.) The Commission accepted the donation of fishing materials, valued at \$250.00, made to the "Let's Go Fishing" Program, from David Christensen Sr., and the late David Christensen Jr., of North Andover, MA.

2i.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$10.00 from Cindy Scally, in memory of Mark Lamonthé, for deposit into the Search & Rescue Account.

2j.) The Commission accepted the donation of one Helly Hansen Helly Tech Performance rain coat, valued at \$350.00, from Ray Mercier, of Concord, NH.

2k.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$2,000 from George Tombarello, in memory of Conservation Officer Levi Frye, who passed away on October 2, 2024.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1.) Financial Statement – Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division – there were no questions.

2.) Andy Timmins, Game Programs Supervisor, came before the Commission and provided an overview on the status of the 10-year big game planning process for white-tailed deer, moose, black bear and wild turkey. (See attached for full presentation).

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

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

Commissioner Stohl, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa & McGonagle.
Staff members: Director Simek, Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that the committee did not meet. He further reported that the committee would be meeting prior to the December 17, 2024 Commission Meeting, at 10:00 a.m., in the east conference room.

Chairman R. Green announced that Commissioner G. Chandler would be added to the Legislative Committee, effective immediately.

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

Commissioner DeRosa, 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 & Stohl.
Staff member: Director Simek.

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

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

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

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee met immediately following the adjournment of the October 15, 2024 Commission Meeting and would be meeting again immediately following the adjournment of the Commission Meeting.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION: Engagement, partnership, awards, public recognition & education strategies for the public & interest groups.

Commissioner DeRosa, Chair; Commissioners: McGonagle & Temple.
Staff members: Dan Bergeron, Kevin Jordan & Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee did not meet. He reported that the committee would be meeting at 9:00 a.m., on December 17, 2024, at the NH Fish & Game Department, in the Director's conference room.

SEACOAST REPORT: Commissioner J. Titone.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that on October 29, 2024, the Bureau of Energy Management (BOEM) completed its lease sale of four (4) lease sites in the Gulf of Maine for offshore wind. Avangrid Renewables won two lease sites, 30 miles off the Massachusetts coast. These two sites cover 223,500 acres were sold off at \$50.00/acre for a total of \$11,173.100. Invenergy won the other two lease sites approximately 80 miles off the NH coast. These two sites cover 215,600 acres and were also sold off at \$50.00/acre for a total of \$10,781.00. There are two potential NH sites for cable landfall. These would be Schiller Station in Newington and Seabrook Station in Seabrook, NH. The decision of where the cables will come to shore won't be made for quite some time.

In addition, he reported that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission determined that striped bass is being overfished and chances to rebuild is questionable. He further reported that at the December meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) they will determine if further measures are necessary to address this.

LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner P. McGonagle.

Chairman R. Green reported that Commissioner P. McGonagle had not been confirmed to this committee as of yet.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner C. Hodgdon.

Chairman R. Green reported that as of yet, Commissioner C. Hodgdon had not been confirmed to continue to serve on this committee.

OLD BUSINESS: Commissioner E. Stohl asked that the Commissioner plaque in the back of the conference room be updated. He stated that the Commission does not get much recognition and that having their name on a plaque is a small gesture.

Director Simek responded that she and Commissioner E. Stohl would further discuss this.

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he received calls from constituents, particularly waterfowl hunters, who had parking concerns at Adams Point.

Director Simek responded that she had been made aware of the situation and that staff were addressing the concerns.

Commissioner B. Temple asked to get the latest laws/rules pertaining to cameras and tree-stands to share with his constituents.

He was directed to see Law Enforcement to obtain that information.

At this time, Chairman R. Green inquired if Commissioner B. Temple was interested in serving as the Commission's Secretary/Treasurer.

Commissioner B. Temple agreed to serve in that role.

Commissioner E. Stohl moved that Commissioner B. Temple serve as the Commission's Secretary/Treasurer and Commissioner R. Green 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 B. Temple reported that there was a new structure/facility at the Claremont Boat Launch in Sullivan County. He inquired how to obtain additional information about the site and was directed to go through Director Simek.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Director Simek introduced herself and stated that she was honored to be at NH Fish & Game and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

She thanked Chairman Green for administering her oath of office, as well as thanking Commissioners Green & Caveney for attending her ceremony, in addition to the promotional ceremony for Conservation Officer Matt Holmes, to the position of Sergeant.

She further thanked Commissioner's Titone & McGonagle for attending the meet & greet with staff, which she felt was important to have them there.

Director Simek reported on the following:

- On Nov 1 the Final Report of the Committee to Study Fish and Game Department Funding and Partnerships. The report includes findings and recommendations of the Committee. Senior Staff are reviewing the document, and will be discussing the recommendations more thoroughly later this month.
- Attended the Governor & Council meeting last week with Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, as well as the Governor's operating budget meeting.

- Presented the department’s budget request at the Fiscal Committee meeting last week with Colonel Jordan and Kathy LaBonte.
- At those meetings she met members of other organizations and the legislative body. We are currently scheduling meetings with other partners and stakeholders to begin building those relationships.
- Legal Coordinator is tracking current LSRs and will be coordinating with the Commission’s Legislative Committee.
- Inland Fisheries Staff completed clean out at the New Hampton hatchery in preparation for the modernization effort. This included stocking some of our larger age classes. A press release is in the works.
- A new parking area at the north end of Ellis Hatch Jr., WMA in Brookfield was created thanks to work from our Habitat staff. This parking area provides greater capacity to alleviate visitors from parking roadside and blocking access for private landowners.
- Non-game staff continue work on revising the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan. There is a web-based survey for public and partner input on the revision. It remains open until Nov 30. We encourage everyone to take survey.
- Last week Wildlife Division Staff operated biological check stations for WTD and with assistance from USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services we have initiated our surveillance for presence of chronic wasting disease.
- Law Enforcement Division is actively recruiting to fill six open Conservation Officer Positions.
- Conservation Officers attended the annual North Country Public Safety Foundation Dinner and the Foundation had a memorial presentation for Conservation Officer Levi Frye.
- Marine Division staff have participated in
 - New England Fisheries Management Council –
 - Next Council meeting scheduled for week of December 2nd.
 - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission –
 - Next Commission Meeting is December 16, 2024.
 - Advisory Committee on Marine Fisheries-

- Met in October, November, and will meet December 9th.
- Another highlight from Marine Division is the work at Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.
 - The Education program finished the 2024 season with hosting approximately 5,000 students – grades 1-4 on field trips that focused on natural and cultural resources of coastal New Hampshire.
 - Staff also co-hosted a national professional meeting of over 300 peers from around the country.
- Federal Aid Staff ensured the agencies reporting requirements were met so that we may continue to participate in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration federal assistance programs.
- Environmental Review team has been extremely busy.
 - Staff have reviewed over 60 pesticide control permits, participated in monthly meetings with New Hampshire DOT and provided technical assistance on over 40 projects so far this year.
- Staff are working on preparing to host the next Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference during spring 2025.
 - Our Public Affairs staff have designed the banner and promotional materials for the conference.
- Shop Wild Saturday event will be on December 14, from 10 am to 2 pm at the Fish and Game HQ. She encouraged everyone to come and check out the merchandise.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Weldon Bosworth, Gilford, NH – welcomed Dr. Stephanie Simek to the agency. He reported that he attended most of the SB-542 (creating a committee to study fish and game department funding and partnerships) committee meetings. He reported that non-consumptive users make up approximately 60% of the department’s budget and felt the upshot to this bill could be allowing non-consumptive users to have participation in the governance over the department, a seat at the table, to which they could get behind this bill and help promote it.

Kristina Snyder, Chester, NH – stated that she watched the presentation regarding the NH Residents Preference Survey of Big Game Species and did not really understand what the agency expects to achieve from the survey. She mirrored Mr. Bosworth’s comments regarding allowing non-consumptive users to have a seat on the Commission.

She stated that this was Commissioner Stohl's third term on the Commission and that this wasn't his job, he is a volunteer.

Representative Cathryn Harvey, Cheshire County (6), welcomed Director Simek to the Fish & Game Department. She reported that she has served on the House Fish, Game & Marine Resources Committee for eight years, hoping to make it ten years. She further stated that she hoped to talk further with the Director in the future.

In addition, Representative Harvey inquired about the potential for having a presentation on ethical hounding at an upcoming Fish & Game Commission Meeting.

Chairman R. Green responded that he was going to wait until Director Simek had adequate time to get acclimated and that he did not forget Representative Harvey's presentation request.

Steve Angers, Conway, NH – welcomed Director Simek to the Executive Director position.

In addition, he welcomed Commissioner Chandler & Poole to the Commission and stated that he was a liaison for Trout Unlimited and was looking forward to working with everyone to improve trout management.

Linda Dionne, Raymond, NH – welcomed Director Simek. She reported that Voices of Wildlife had a coyote hounding bill last year and did not get any support from the legislature and felt a hounding presentation would not have any benefit.

A.J. Hunter, Conway, NH – stated that as a proud consumptive user of the state's natural resources, he wanted to thank everyone for managing the rules/regulations properly and thanked the department for the survey presentation regarding the game management plan.

At 2:05 p.m., Commissioner E. Stohl moved to adjourn and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Ray Green, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission

NH Residents' Preference Survey of Big Game Species Management, 2024



Survey Design

- Conducted by UNH Survey Center for NHFG
- Online - invitation and reminders
- Stratified across 6 management regions
- 31,800 NH residents - including hunters and non-hunters
 - 7,800 residents from the general population
 - 24,000 from the hunting license holders
 - Estimated 10-18% response rate
 - 3,180 - 5,724 usable surveys

Survey Design

Questions designed to measure:

- Rating of the agency performance
- Familiarity with BGS management
- Desired population sizes (more, less, same), strength of opinion
- Support for hunting (management vs recreation)
- Participation in hunting
- Area of state
- How they value wildlife



Time Line for BGM Planning Process

- UNH conducts survey (December 2024)
- Survey results in (February 2025)
- Initial draft BGMP completed (February 2025)
- Solicit input from public on draft plan at 3-5 public meetings (mid-April 2025)
- Draft BGMP finalized (May 2025)
- Draft BGMP presented to Executive Director and Commission as info item (May 2025)
- Present BGMP to Commission for approval (Jun 2025)
- New BGMP takes effect (Jan 2026)