

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

MAY 10, 2017 COMMISSION MEETING

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

Commissioners Present: T. Tichy, R. Phillipson, J. McGonagle, T. Baldwin, J. Ryan, V. Greco
T. Hubert, D. Patch, F. Clews, B. Carr and W. Morse.

Commissioners absent/excused:
Executive Director Normandeau – Present

Chairman Tichy called the meeting to order at 1:02 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 Greco moved to approve the April 12, 2017 Commission Minutes as written, and Commissioner Patch seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.
- 2.) Colonel Jordan recognized the 2016 New Hampshire Conservation Officers of the Year as follows:

Colonel Jordan presented the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association of the Year Award to Sergeant Thomas Dakai of Canaan, NH. Sergeant Dakai has been a member of the Fish and Game Dive Team for almost two decades and currently is the Dive Master. He is also noted for his knowledge and skills in trapping; he has investigated a number of illegal trapping cases and works closely with the trapping community.

“Throughout his 25 years as a Fish and Game Conservation Officer, Sergeant Dakai has shown an outstanding work ethic and attitude,” said Fish and Game Law Enforcement Chief Kevin Jordan. “Tom prides himself on being fair and approachable, and is well respected by his fellow officers, as well as the sportsmen and women he serves.”



Sergeant Thomas M. Dakai. Select image for high-resolution photo.

The Conservation Law Enforcement Chief's Association (CLECA), is an organization made up of Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs from the states of Virginia to Maine, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement and Canadian Provinces. The primary purpose of the Association is to encourage and promote conservation law enforcement cooperation among the eastern states represented. Annually, CLECA recognizes an officer from each state for their outstanding contributions to fish and wildlife protection of our country's natural resources.



Conservation Officer Eric Hannett. Select image for high-resolution photo.

Colonel Jordan presented Conservation Officer Eric Hannett, of Fitzwilliam, NH, with the Shikar-Safari International Wildlife Officer of the Year Award. Officer Hannett is a 14-year veteran of the Fish and Game Law Enforcement Division. Officer Hannett previously worked as a police officer in Portsmouth. He leads his Fish and Game District in successful prosecutions of Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle violations, baiting and littering cases. One fisheries case involved over-limits of fish being taken on the Connecticut River. Operation Pan Fish Plunder, as it came to be called, led to a significant undercover operation that spanned three states and resulted in multiple felony convictions.

Officer Hannett has been an enthusiastic supporter and annual participant at the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association's Ride-In for Easter Seals Camp Sno-Mo his entire career.

“Conservation Officer Hannett’s enthusiasm and teamwork approach to every challenge is refreshing,” said Fish and Game Law Enforcement Chief Kevin Jordan. “Without question, Eric cares about the people he works with and those he serves.”

The Shikar-Safari Club International was founded in 1952, as a group of international hunters who joined together to exchange experiences and ideas about hunting. It started as a social hunting organization, but soon recognized its potential to accomplish meaningful goals in the field of conservation. About 1973, the Shikar-Safari International Foundation was formed. Moneys raised by the members of the Shikar-Safari International are used to carry out various conservation projects throughout the world.

Colonel Jordan presented a Meritorious Service Award to three Fish & Game Officers, Lt. Bradley Morse, Conservation Officer Eric Fluette, and Conservation Officer Kevin Bronson,

for braving the extreme conditions while searching for a lost hiker in the White Mountains on Christmas Day, 2016.

After hiker Jack Holden was reported overdue from a planned 22-mile Christmas Day trek, the officers hiked up Bond Cliff trail to the summit through deep, drifted snow carrying heavy packs. The temperature dropped from the thirties to zero or below, with higher winds after sundown, but the officers did not turn back. They had discovered what they believed to be very faint boot tracks in the windblown snow. They called the command post to request permission to continue hiking up beyond tree line. These Conservation Officers were determined to accomplish their assigned task in locating Jack Holden and bringing him down to safety.



Lt. Bradley Morse, Conservation Officer Eric Fluette, and Conservation Officer Kevin Bronson. Select image for high-resolution photo.

At 8:20 p.m. on Christmas Day, these Conservation Officers located Jack Holden’s body at the summit of Bond Cliff Mountain. Sadly, he had passed away due to exposure long before the team was able to reach him. Even in these brutal temperatures, high winds and blowing snow, the search team processed and secured the scene. The hour was late and the weather not conducive to aircraft flying, so the officers had to spend the night near the summit.

“As a direct result of these three Conservation Officers dedication to duty, their superior physical fitness and their determination to accomplish their assigned tasks, Jack Holden was located before he would become buried under blowing snow,” said Fish and Game Law Enforcement Chief Kevin Jordan. “While the outcome was a tragic one, the Holden family was able to find some solace, peace and closure in the fact that their loved one had been located.”

The Commission applauded the officers and thanked them for their dedication and for what they do on a daily basis.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1.) Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, reviewed the monthly financial statement dated April 30, 2017, with the Commission.

Kathy reported that the Department is only \$130,000 shy of its biggest sale year for OHRV registrations.

LATE ITEM:

1.) Commissioner Hubert moved to accept the donation of 5 “Graham MegaMover” portable stretchers, valued at \$24.59/each, for a total of \$122.95, Commissioner Carr seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2.) Commissioner Phillipson moved to accept a \$10.00 donation from Granite State Kayak Anglers, to be utilized for Inland Fisheries Management, Commissioner Carr seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

POLICY COMMITTEE: Commissioners McGonagle & Clews. Commissioner McGonagle reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting to discuss the recent verbal attack on a Commissioner regarding his personal beliefs on a senate bill. He reported that the discussion revolved around whether the Commission should be responding to such attacks or not.

Commissioner McGonagle moved, should the Commission take a proactive position & address attacks on Commissioners, Commission Phillipson seconded.

Much discussion ensued.

Commissioner Patch stated, "I feel we should determine the facts and correct what's being said, as this could be a never ending battle."

Commissioner Hubert stated, "I agree with Commissioner Patch in addressing these attacks on a case by case basis. I suggest we derive a procedure to follow to address these attacks and where to draw the line in responding to them, as it could be a significant challenge."

The Commission questioned Paul Sanderson, Legal Coordinator, as to recording methods and his recommendations.

Paul responded that the Commission Meetings could have a webcam, which could be made available under the right-to-know law, which is an option to responding in higher quality.

Director Normandeau reported that numerous agencies have been successful dealing with legislation that affects multiple agencies by having 1 letter with several agency head signatures on it. He stated, "You could do a similar thing for Commissioners and have 1 letter with all your signatures."

Commissioner McGonagle stated, "I want to have some plan of recourse, some avenue to try to correct things in the public eye."

Commissioner Hubert stated, "I support the Commission crafting a response relative our position on items, however, I oppose the motion on the table to create a policy."

Commissioner Phillipson stated, "It goes further than the one person they are trying to cause influence with. We need to stick together here."

Commissioner Carr stated, "The attack was basically on all of us, not just one person."

The debate amongst the Commission was whether or not the Commission shall take a position and address personal attacks on Commissioners, as it relates to official Commission duties.

The 2nd to the motion on the floor was withdrawn.

The original motion was withdrawn.

Chairman Tichy directed the Policy Committee to discuss an avenue in which to respond to personal attacks on Commissioners, as it related to official Commission duties and bring it back before the full Commission for vote.

Commissioner Carr stated, "Just because we have a policy, does not mean we have to use it every time."

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE: Commissioner Morse, Chair; Commissioners Hubert, Greco, Patch, and Baldwin. Commissioner Morse reported that the committee did not meet.

RIVERS COMMITTEE: Commissioner Ryan reported that the committee met and reviewed legislation.

LAKES COMMITTEE: Commissioner Clews reported that he believes the Rivers & Lakes Committees will be combined in the very near future.

HANDBOOK & ORIENTATION COMMITTEE: Commissioner Patch, Chair; Commissioner Carr. Commissioner Patch reported that the committee did not meet.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE: Commissioner Greco, Chair; Commissioners McGonagle, Tichy and Phillipson. Commissioner Greco reported that the committee was sunset at this point.

WILDLIFE HERITAGE FOUNDATION: Commissioner Greco reported that Discover Wild NH Day was a huge success, with approximately 9,000 people attending.

AWARDS COMMITTEE: Commissioners Hubert, Chair; Commissioners Baldwin, Phillipson and McGonagle. Commissioner Hubert encouraged everyone to submit their nominations for the 2017 Commission Awards of Excellence, need to be postmarked by December 31, 2017.

NEW BUSINESS: N/A

OLD BUSINESS: Commissioner Patch inquired as to getting some clarification from Paul Sanderson, Legal Coordinator, as to the Commission's duties as they relate to legislation, particularly as it relates to firearms. Paul encouraged them to refer to 206:4-a-V (Duties)

V. Establishment of positions on proposed legislation that affects fish, wildlife, and marine resources and the overall management of the fish and game department.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Director Normandeau reported that things were quiet lately.

He reported that the department was waiting to see how the Governor's budget would affect our agency. He reported that it would unfund an additional 3 Conservation Officer positions, as well as a couple of other positions.

Commissioner Morse inquired as to how much overtime Conservation Officers were having to do.

Colonel Jordan reported that the officers are working overtime. He stated, "It's affecting morale & safety. With working the extra hours, the concern is the officers getting tired and in fact, getting hurt."

Commissioner Carr reported that there were 173 rescues last year and just as many to date this year.

Director Normandeau reported that he has had no feedback relative to the capital budget request relative to the Wild Goose boat access proposal. He reported that he heard this project received the most e-mails ever on a capital budget request.

Commissioner Hubert encouraged people to reach out to their Senators & encourage them to support this project.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS:

COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Commissioner Baldwin had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER CARR: Commissioner Carr had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER GRECO: Commissioner Greco had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPSON: Commissioner Phillipson had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER MORSE: Commissioner Morse had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER RYAN: Commissioner Ryan had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER PATCH: Commissioner Patch had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER MCGONAGLE: Commissioner McGonagle had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER CLEWS: Commissioner Clews had nothing to report.

COMMISSIONER HUBERT: Commissioner Hubert had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONER TICHY: Commissioner Tichy had nothing to report at this time.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Julia Sinclair, audience member, inquired as to whether the department had a committee to encourage safe hiking & increase awareness.

Colonel Jordan responded that the “Hike Safe” Program has many folks involved in getting the word out & promoting safety, however, the rescue numbers are still climbing. The department tries billing those that are irresponsible, however, usually with no result.

Commissioner Greco stated, “More rescues are happening everywhere. People just disregard safety.”

At this time, 3:43 p.m., Commissioner McGonagle moved to adjourn and Commissioner Hubert seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Respectfully submitted,

James Ryan, Secretary

Approved: _____
Ted Tichy, Chairman