

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

APRIL 20, 2021 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: There was no physical meeting location, as this meeting took place via Microsoft Teams.

Chairman Stohl called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He informed everyone that the public is entitled to listen in by following the instructions below. He reported that no public comment would be taken during the meeting, as public comment would be accepted for 3 consecutive days after the Commission Meeting, via e-mail @ comments@wildlife.nh.gov, or by sending comments to: NH Fish & Game Department, Attn: Tanya Haskell, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, N.H., 03301. Comments received within the comment period will be compiled into the April 20, 2021 Commission Minutes.

Microsoft Teams meeting

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Chairman Stohl read aloud Governor Sununu's Checklist to Ensure Meetings Are Compliant With The Right-to-Know Law During The State Of Emergency:

“As Executive Director of the Fish and Game Department, and Chairman of the NH Fish and Game Commission, we find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 as extended pursuant to Executive Order 2020-05, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional possibilities to submit comments via e-mail to: comments@wildlife.nh.gov, or mailing comments to: NH Fish & Game

Department, Attn: Tanya Haskell, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH, 03301. Comments will be accepted for 3 consecutive days after the April 20, 2021 Commission Meeting. All comments received within the comment period will be compiled into the April 20, 2021 Commission Minutes.

We are utilizing **Microsoft Teams** for this electronic meeting. All members of the **Fish and Game Commission** and the staff of the Fish and Game Department have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and submit comments as indicated in the above paragraph.

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the Fish and Game website and have been posted in the lobby of the Fish and Game headquarters, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH.

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:

If anybody has a problem, please email: Paul.Sanderson@wildlife.nh.gov.

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote.**”

At this time, 1:05 p.m., Commissioner Green took a roll call of Commission members participating in the meeting: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes”, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”.

It was later clarified by Commissioner McInnis that he was, in fact, present & listening to the meeting, however, was experiencing technical difficulty in obtaining speaking access during the beginning of the meeting.

Executive Director Mason – Present on the call.

At this time, Chairman Stohl asked that everyone remotely join in the pledge of allegiance.

ACTION ITEMS:

1.) Commissioner Patch moved to approve the March 9, 2021 Commission Minutes, as written, and Commissioner DeBow seconded.

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. 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 Green moved to approve consent agenda items 2a – 2d, as presented below, and Commissioner Temple seconded.

2a.) Commission accepted the following donations to be deposited into the Search & Rescue Account: (K. Jordan)

- Robert Zoletti - \$500.00
 - Marilyn & Kathleen Conrad - \$200.00
 - Gloria Mullavey - \$ 20.00
 - Linda Poutre - \$ 25.00
 - Elaine Kinder - \$ 20.00
- Total: \$765.00

2b.) Commission accepted a \$30.00 donation from the Frazier Family, Rochester, NH, in memory of Patrick Murphy, to be utilized by the “Let’s Go Fishing” program. (N. Whitley)

2c.) Commission accepted a \$7,697 donation to the Nongame Program from 5 Aviation Investors LLC, for mitigating impacts to New England cottontail habitat in Londonderry, NH. (M. Ellingwood).

2d.) Commission accepted the following donations made to the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- Susan Fox, Plymouth, CA - \$200.00
 - Charles Lamprey, Jr., North Hampton, NH - \$100.00
 - The Northern Trust Company, Oakbrook Terrace, IL - \$500.00
 - Kathy & Robert Yeaton, E. Granby, CT - \$ 50.00
 - Goldenchild Back Lake Nationals & Vintage Show Org. Comm. \$300.00
 - Paul & Marilyn Luongo, Westwood, MA - \$100.00
- Total: \$1,250.00

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, "Yes", M. Lachance, "Yes", J. Caveney, "Yes", B. Temple, "Yes", F. Bird, "Yes", P. DeBow, "Yes", P. McInnis, "Yes", E. Stohl, "Yes", C. Hodgdon, "Yes", and R. Green, "Yes". The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

3.) John Magee, Fisheries Biologist, came back before the Commission requesting to expend up to \$30,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to conserve 40 acres along Rand Brook in Frankestown, NH.

Commissioner Green reported that he visited the property and spoke with sportsmen who provided positive feedback on the area. Commissioner Green stated, "I feel it is a great opportunity for the department."

At this time, Commissioner Green moved to approve the expenditure of up to \$30,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to conserve 40 acres along Rand Brook in Frankestown, NH., Commissioner Hodgdon seconded.

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, "Yes", M. Lachance, "Yes", J. Caveney, "Yes", B. Temple, "Yes", F. Bird, "Yes", P. DeBow, "Yes", P. McInnis, "Yes", E. Stohl, "Yes", C. Hodgdon, "Yes", and R. Green, "Yes". The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

4.) Paul Sanderson, Legal Coordinator, reported that the game season initial proposals have been filed, public hearings held, receiving 174 comments with attachments, which were sent to all Commissioners for review.

Mark Ellingwood, Chief, Wildlife Division, Game Program Supervisor & Game Project Leaders, came before the Commission requesting adoption of the Department's Final Game Season Proposals as follows:

DEER: - Commissioner DeBow moved to approve the deer proposals as presented and Commissioner Green seconded. (D. Bergeron)

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, "Yes", M. Lachance, "Yes", J. Caveney, "Yes", B. Temple, "Yes", F. Bird, "Yes", P. DeBow, "Yes", P. McInnis, "Yes", E. Stohl, "Yes", C. Hodgdon, "Yes", and R. Green, "Yes". The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

BEAR: - Commissioner Green moved to approve the bear proposals as presented and Commissioner Patch seconded. (A. Timmins)

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

MOOSE: - Commissioner Green moved to approve the moose season proposals as presented and Commissioner Hodgdon seconded. (H. Jones)

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

TURKEY: - Commissioner McInnis moved to approve the turkey proposals as presented and Commissioner Green seconded. (A. Keating)

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

FURBEARER: - Commissioner DeBow moved to approve the furbearer proposals as presented and Commissioner Patch seconded. (P. Tate)

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

SMALL GAME & PHEASANT: - Commissioner Green moved to approve the small game proposals as presented and Commissioner Temple seconded. (K. Bordeau)

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Mark stated, “I’m proud of Dan Bergeron, Game Program Supervisor, and the Public Affairs staff, for formulating all input received into a final package for Commission consideration & adoption.”

On behalf of the Commission, Chairman Stohl thanked Mark, Dan & Program Leaders for the information & presentations. He stated, “Good work by all.”

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1. Financial Statement – no discussion.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

POLICY COMMITTEE: Chair: B. Temple; Commissioners: Lachance & Bird.

Commissioner Temple reported that the committee did not meet. He reported that they are looking forward to having a physical meeting soon.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE: Commissioner Green, Chair; Commissioners: Hodgdon, Patch & DeBow. Commissioner Green reminded everyone that the committee would be meeting every Friday at 2pm, via Microsoft Teams, to receive legislative updates from Paul Sanderson, Legal Coordinator, and to have discussion on pertinent legislation and discuss strategies.

The following legislation was discussed:

Commissioner Green moved to support SB-129, relative to minimizing environmental impacts on the habitats of endangered or threatened species, sections 1 & 2, and Commissioner Lachance seconded.

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner Green moved that the Commission testify on HB-186, tomorrow, April 21, 2021, to oppose the word “majority” and leave it as “all” shall be resident to seacoast region, Commissioner McInnis seconded.

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, “Yes”, M. Lachance, “Yes”, J. Caveney, “Yes”, B. Temple, “Yes”, F. Bird, “Yes”, P. DeBow, “Yes, P. McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, C. Hodgdon, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner McInnis reported that he had a conflict and would not be able to testify.

Paul Sanderson, Legal Coordinator, offered to file testimony electronically on behalf of Commissioner McInnis.

Commissioner McInnis recommend Cheri Patterson, Chief, Marine Division testify as well.

Commissioner Hodgdon departed the meeting at this time.

AWARDS COMMITTEE: Commissioner Lachance, Chair; Commissioners: Bird, & Caveney. Commissioner Lachance reported that the committee did not meet. Tanya reported that she sent out letters to the Commission Award Winners & Nominators, and will be ordering the awards soon, in hopes of the Commission presenting them in person at a future Commission Meeting.

RIVERS COMMITTEE: Commissioner Hodgdon departed the meeting prior to this report.

LAKES COMMITTEE: Commissioner Temple. Commissioner Temple had nothing to report at this time.

HANDBOOK & ORIENTATION COMMITTEE: Commissioner Patch, Chair; Commissioner Green & Caveney. Commissioner Patch reported that respective changes have been made to the Commission Handbook and will be shared with the full Commission in the near future.

A final meeting with Heidi Holman, Nongame Wildlife Biologist, will take place next week, at which time the committee intends to bring the final version before the full Commission.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE: Commissioner Hodgdon, Chair: Commissioners Temple, Stohl & DeBow. Commissioner Hodgdon departed the meeting prior to this report.

WILDLIFE HERITAGE FOUNDATION: Commissioner Hodgdon. Commissioner Hodgdon departed the meeting prior to this report.

NEW BUSINESS:

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 Temple reported that the Old #4 Rod & Gun Club would be making some needed safety improvements to its shooting range, which will be occurring this summer.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: The Director will report on recent department activities. This is an information item only.

Director Mason reported that the Hatchery Advisory Committee is now meeting every Monday at 3:30 p.m., via Microsoft Teams. He reported that they are looking into the phosphorus issue at the Powder Mill Hatchery, and others, to see what is going to be required to meet standards of EPA today and in the future.

He reported that currently the water leaving the hatchery is now testing 14 parts per billion and at another location, 17 parts per billion, the requirement is 12 parts per billion or less.

He reported that some proactive activities now taking place at the hatchery are helping to reduce the phosphorus levels. He reported that there is still much progress to be made, however, he stated that it would most likely be costly.

Director Mason reported that this was the 2nd year in a shift of how the department is stocking trout. He reported that Dianne Timmins, Coldwater Fisheries Biologist, recently presented to the Hatchery Advisory Committee and will be providing the same presentation at the May 11, 2021 Commission Meeting.

He reported that Scott Decker, Acting Inland Fisheries Chief, was on extended medical leave and that the Director was currently handling many of the issues on his behalf at this time. He further reported that there would be an Inland Fisheries Division Chief search extended beyond NH F&G, and that they would be interviewing both external & internal candidates at the same time.

He reported that the Department was working with DES to draft AOT rules for eventual public review. He further reported that a pre-public hearing had been held to solicit public feedback and that comments would be reviewed and considered before a final draft rule package was formulated.

He further reported that he attended the NH Trappers Association Meeting in Boscawen, NH, and was well received. He reported that Pat Tate, Furbearer Project Leader, gave a great presentation.

Director Mason reported that Governor Sununu has suspended the mask mandate. He reported that the next 60 days would reflect some changes to the current COVID work conditions, as Governor Sununu would like all agencies to be providing full public service by May 7, 2021.

In closing, Director Mason inquired as to whether anyone had any objections to having the May 11, 2021 Commission Meeting at the Pemigewasset F&G Club, 295 Beede Road, Holderness, NH. He reported that the Commission has met there before free of charge and that the facility is large enough to allow for an in person meeting, with plenty of space to social distance.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC: Public comment was not heard, as comments were taken electronically via e-mail to Tanya.haskell@wildlife.nh.gov, and by mail to: NH Fish & Game Department, Attn: Tanya Haskell, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301, for 3 consecutive days after the meeting. (See below for comments received).

At this time, 3:03 p.m., Commissioner Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner McInnis seconded.

A roll call vote was taken of all Commissioners participating: D. Patch, "Yes", M. Lachance, "Yes", J. Caveney, "Yes", B. Temple, "Yes", F. Bird, "Yes", P. DeBow, "Yes", P.

McInnis, “Yes”, E. Stohl, “Yes”, “Yes”, and R. Green, “Yes”. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Eric Stohl, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission

PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED WITHIN COMMENT PERIOD:

Comment from Kristina Snyder, Chester, NH -

When NH Fish & Game requests public input at hearings and through written comment, it is done with the promise that public input will be a factor in decisions the department makes. However after listening to the recent commission meeting and no changes to the rule proposals, that was clearly not done. One has to wonder why does the department continue to make the pretense that public comment is considered? This can be confidently said by me as I have attended these commission meetings since before most of the current commission has been appointed and also watched a change over of much of the staff and Executive Director. It is getting progressively worse, not better. When the moose season was discussed, other states were used by comparing their more liberal seasons as a justification for keeping moose permits open in an area in NH, despite moose populations reaching the cutoff threshold. When coyote trapping was discussed other states were not brought up to compare with how they had much more conservative seasons. That information was submitted and verbally discussed in public comment and at the hearing. Instead, we were told basically “you’re lucky we don’t trap them all year round like we used to”. So, if the department is only going to make other state comparisons when it is convenient to support what they want to do, but ignore state comparisons when the public brings it up as a reason to possibly limit a season, any semblance of objectivity and public input consideration has gone out the window. The Fish & Game Department (director, commission, and staff) had a really good opportunity to show they represent all of the public, put wildlife first, and are not exclusively there for hunters, anglers, and trappers. Instead, it was a complete failure. Now many members of the public will lose even more trust in the department and the process. Hours of time and energy spent on a useless endeavor, performed by the department only because statute mandates that these hearings exist. How simple it would be if you didn’t even have to make the whole pretense anymore? Just say here it is folks, this is what we want because we are here for hunters, anglers and trappers and to fulfill their wishes and be done with it. None of these tedious hearings and pretense of considering ALL public input. What recourse does the public have now? Building a clear case against the department and the commission so when legislation is introduced, change will inevitably come. The public can effectively illustrate that the staff and commission are unyielding and unwilling to compromise outside of catering to the sportsmen’s community. There is no reason to be trapping coyotes in March, none. It was really a small thing to do, to show goodwill towards the public and a grasp of how society is changing by shortening the length of the coyote trapping season. People don’t enjoy the visual of pregnant coyotes being bludgeoned by trappers in March, now that is what we are left with. In addition, there was no mention of the two commissioners involved in a bear trapping raffle being sponsored by their group the NH Trappers Association (NHTA) and their showing that they will support the members of the NHTA and its directives over the rest of the public of NewHampshire. A couple of hundred trappers and their wishes takes precedence over everyone else. I personally donate at minimum \$250 a year to the nongame fund, a

trapping license by contrast is \$36. I can with confidence assert that the two NHTA commissioners will never vote against limiting trapping no matter what is behind the request to do so. Now Director Scott Mason also mentioned that he went to a NHTA monthly meeting, he is therefore okay with bear trapping too then or else he might have mentioned how his department through its two commissioners made national news about supporting and promoting it and expressed his dismay? A recreational bear killing activity that is only legal in one state, and it's not New Hampshire! Overall this was another highly disappointing look at what transpires at the NH Fish & Game Department. If this keeps up the good programs like the nongame will suffer as more and more people will be so disgusted with the department and its handling of the state's wildlife in general, they won't give a dime anywhere. One has to wonder if the commission and most of the staff will ever consider that these actions of not compromising or taking into account all members of the public, will impact the posting of private property against any trespass? There was even an admittance by Director Mason that this is already occurring. Something to consider moving forward, because remember in life there is no permanence. Things will change at that department and with the commission and it will come sooner than you think.

Comment from Weldon Bosworth, Ph.D., Gilford, NH –

Mr. Mason and Commissioners: During Tuesday's (4.20.2021) hearing I listened with disbelief as Mr. Tate rationalized a decision that no comments on the biennial rules pertaining to furbearers would change or even minimally affect the original proposed rules provided the Commission in February. I had a great deal of difficulty following Mr. Tate's explanation of why nothing in my or Dr. Cadot's testimony on the fisher or my testimony on the two fox species specifically and all furbearers generally made any difference to his opinion. He did not refute or even comment generally upon any of the points we made in our testimony. I found his total disregard of our testimony inconsistent with the statutory requirement that public input be solicited and considered. Instead of addressing the conclusions in our testimony, Mr. Tate primarily dwelled on his various opinions of why CPUE and 'harvest' was declining and why the trends in these metrics could not possibly reflect declining populations of these species. His opinions, none of which were supported by any data, appeared to be his way of obscuring the real issue, i.e., the dramatic declines in 'harvest' of these species. The many variables Mr. Tate discussed such as 1) fewer skilled trappers led to lower CPUE and 'harvest', 2) weather affects led to lower CPUE and 'harvest', 3) some fishers' have distemper and this explains lower CPUE and 'harvest', and 4) some fishers are killed by bobcats and thus leads to lower CPUE and 'harvest', while perhaps biologically interesting, are not systematically collected, independently verified data. Nor was any actual data presented to quantify these the potential effects he mentioned. This is a far cry from how science works in the real world. The purpose of collecting 'harvest' and CPUE data is to support sound scientific management decisions, not to ignore these data and discuss why they should not be relied upon in some cases but not others. For instance, in Mr. Tate's somewhat disjointed presentation, I think we learned that CPUEs should not be relied upon for the fisher, but the fact that here were upticks in CPUE for the foxes was good and evidence of "recovery." We learned that UNH is looking for new methods to develop indices which will do better at quantifying wildlife populations. This is great news but not justification for not acting until when or if these indices are available. We also heard some misleading suggestions by both Mr. Tate and Mr. Bergeron, that because of the low numbers supporting CPUE data that these data were not reliable. This conflates power analysis and conservative hypothesis testing with trend analysis, in this case based upon over 30 years of both data and trapping license numbers. Nevertheless, if this is their opinion, there are over 30 years' worth of data to test this hypothesis and

quantify the effect on the “predictability” (as they termed it) of CPUE data. In the absence of analysis of this “loss of predictability” this claim is without merit. Regardless, quoting from your bear biologist, Mr. Timmins, it should be the trend that is important, not a couple of years data. Lastly, we heard, in answer to the only question asked Mr. Tate by any member of the Commission, that yes, indeed, all comments were read both by Mr. Tate as well as Messrs. Ellingwood and Bergeron. In fact, Mr. Tate allowed he had spent all of 10 hours doing so. While reading of this testimony apparently satisfied the requirement for due diligence in this process, it apparently did not lead to an understanding of the principal 2 concepts and conclusions based upon extensive analysis of the data that was presented in my testimony, which were: 1) Decisions made based upon short term data while ignoring long-term trends results in a shifting baseline, which is totally inimical to managing for stable, sustainable populations; 2) Use of one or two annual increases (aka upticks) in metrics such as year or two of fox CPUE should not be used as an excuse not to address the long-term significant declines in the populations of these species; 3) Cherry-picking data that support your opinion cannot be extrapolated to the entire data set. For instance, using fisher data from northern regions to make decisions that no management changes are needed in the southern regions as Mr. Tate did is a logical and management fallacy and inconsistent with sound science; 4) When the only two lines of evidence that are supported by consistently collected data, CPUE and ‘harvest’ data are telling you the same thing, i.e., indices which reflect changes in populations are declining, this increases the weight of this evidence and one does not glibly ignore these lines of evidence in favor of opinions that are not supported by analysis, and; 5) A prudent manager/biologist should take the position that when there is some uncertainty in the implications of the underlying data, a cautionary approach should err on the side of the wildlife, not proceed full steam ahead with fingers crossed. At least, If their reading of my testimony led to any understanding of these concepts, it certainly was not apparent at Tuesday’s hearing. It is indeed unfortunate, albeit not unexpected I guess, that no Commissioners asked specific questions that challenged Mr. Tate’s approach to disqualifying his own data. The testimony submitted by me and others was available to the Commission for a couple of months. One would expect that the conclusions based upon detailed analysis of Fish and Game’s own data by two PhD ecologists with over 80 years collective experience would have some credibility and lead to substantive questions of the staff biologists by the Commission. In any other situation a governing board with responsibilities such as yours would consider alternative interpretations of data by qualified experts. Indeed, is this not why an opportunity for public comment is provided? Unfortunately, Tuesday’s hearing demonstrated otherwise. As representatives of the public and guardian of NH’s Public Trust wildlife there is a public expectation that the Commission fulfill their fiduciary duty of managing wildlife populations and habitats for the purpose of sustaining healthy populations of wildlife by vigorously demanding that all decisions affecting NH’s wildlife be supported by sound science. On Tuesday’s hearing I saw that sound science gave way to unsupported opinions and the Commission’s continued indifference to considering legitimate public comment. The following charts are reality, not what Mr. Tate wants you to believe.

Comment from BJ Wahl, Sullivan, NH –

I was deeply disappointed in yesterday’s Commission votes on the hunting/trapping rules, and the fact that department biologists did not feel the need to make any of the changes the public suggested. What I feel you all fail to address in any way is animal cruelty. How is baiting, hounding, and trapping not animal cruelty?! Or killing nursing mothers by not having a pause in hunting and trapping during the months young are being raised?

Since the entire Fish and Game Department and Commission seem to be hopeless causes, we will continue pushing for a Legislative intervention in your ongoing war on wildlife. Someone has to be the voice of the voiceless and make the changes that will allow them to live their already difficult lives in peace.

With great disappointment and disagreement.