

## NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

### SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: Bridgewater Meeting House, 297 Mayhew Turnpike, Bridgewater, NH

Commissioners Present: J. Caveney, B. Temple, P. DeBow, M. Lachance, S. Price, M. Hodgson, E. Stohl, P. McInnis, & R. Green.

Strafford County Commissioner position: vacant

Commissioners absent/excused: C. Hodgdon

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman Stohl called the meeting to order at 1:03 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 Green moved to approve the August 10, 2021 Commission Meeting Minutes, as written, and Commissioner Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

1a.) Commissioner Caveney moved to approve the September 9, 2021 Special Commission Meeting Minutes and Commissioner DeBow seconded. The motion carried with 7 in favor, 2 abstentions (M. Hodgson & P. McInnis).

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 McInnis moved to approve consent agenda items 2a.-2g., as presented below, and Commissioner Green seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2a.) Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$40.00 from Tim Decker, Hanover, NH, in appreciation for maintaining the fields at Lower Shaker Wildlife Management Area, to be deposited into the Wildlife Habitat Account.

2b.) Commission accepted the donation of tackle craft, lure making & fly tying materials, made to the “Let’s Go Fishing” Program, valued at \$2,500, from Ann Weider, Barrington, NH, in memory of her husband, Greg Weider, who was an avid fisherman.

2c.) Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$100.00 from Donald Vezina, to honor & in appreciation for the service consistently provided by the Law Enforcement Division’s Sonar Team, to be deposited into the Search & Rescue Account.

2d.) Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$200.00 from Mark Wheaton, to honor & in appreciation for the service consistently provided by the Law Enforcement Division's Dive Team, to be deposited into the Search & Rescue Account.

2e.) Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$47.00 from an anonymous donor attending the Cheshire Ag Days, to honor & in appreciation for the service consistently provided by the Law Enforcement Division, to be deposited into the Operation Game Thief Account.

2f.) Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$100.00 from Sharon Joyce, Michelle Auger, Kathy Dayotis & Fran Allen, in memory of George Stokinger, to be deposited into the Search & Rescue Account.

2g.) Commission accepted a donation in the amount of \$1,000 from Joanne Carlson, in memory of retired District One Sergeant, Carl Carlson, who recently passed away, to be deposited into the Search & Rescue Account.

3.) Jim Oehler, Habitat Program Supervisor, came before the Commission requesting acceptance of the donation of a parking area, valued at \$1,250.00. from Kevin Smith, Raynham, MA, to provide public access to the Upper Ammonoosuc Wildlife Management Area in Stark, NH.

Jim reported that Mr. Smith reached out to the Department requesting that the pedestrian trail on his lot be moved to a different location, given he was planning to build a home and driveway in the general location. The Department was amenable to the request and during discussions, Mr. Smith provided the Department with a pleasant surprise by building the parking area with capacity for 3 – 4 vehicles. Jim reported that the parking area will provide much improved public access to the Upper Ammonoosuc Wildlife Management Area.

Commissioner Green moved to accept the donation of the parking area from Mr. Smith, Raynham, MA, and Commissioner Lachance seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

4.) Jim Oehler, came before the Commission requesting acceptance of the donation of a 30-acre conservation easement from the Town of New London, at the Low Plains Natural Area, on Route 11, in New London, NH.

Jim reported that the Department currently holds a conservation easement over the 172.3-acre Low Plains Natural Area. The Town of New London recently acquired 30 acres directly abutting the 172.3 acres, increasing the Town's ownership to 202 acres. Jim reported that the Town is offering to donate a conservation easement on the additional 30 acres to the Department. With the easement, the property will forever be protected from development and will be open for wildlife based recreation in perpetuity. He further reported that the entire Low Plains area is prime wetlands and provides significant habitat for numerous species of wildlife.

In closing, Jim reported that the only cost associated with the purchase would be staff time & closing costs.

Much discussion ensued.

Commissioner DeBow moved to accept the donation of a 30-acre conservation easement from the Town of New London, at the Low Plains Natural Area, on Route 11, in New London, NH., and Commissioner Lachance seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

5.) Commissioner Green moved to accept six prize donations (listed below) generously provided by Sturm, Ruger & Company, Woodman Arms, Prime Archery, Morse Sporting Goods, The Ruffed Grouse Society, and the NH State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, for use in the 2020 Deer Hunter Mail Survey, 2020 Bow Hunter Survey, 2020-21 Small Game Hunter Survey, 2020 Ruffed Grouse Wing & Tail Survey, and the 2020 Spring Turkey Hunter Survey, and Commissioner Caveney seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**2020 Deer Hunter Mail Survey (2 prizes)**

Ruger American Rifle with Vortex Crossfire II Riflescope (Model #16934)  
Valued at \$749.00, generously donated by Sturm, Ruger & Company

Woodman Arms Patriot Muzzleloader  
Valued at \$799.00, generously donated by Woodman Arms, Fremont, NH.

**2020 Bow Hunter Survey (1 prize)**

Prime Black 5 Compound bow valued at \$999.00, generously donated by Prime Archery and Morse Sporting Goods of Hillsboro, NH.

**2020-21 Small Game Hunter Survey (1 prize)**

Ruger 77/22 Rifle (Model #7226)  
Valued at \$1,269.00, generously donated by Sturm, Ruger & Company

**2020 Ruffed Grouse Wing and Tail Survey (1 prize)**

Benelli Nova Pump 20-Gauge shotgun valued at \$449.00, generously donated by The Ruffed Grouse Society

**2021 Spring Turkey Hunter Survey (1 prize)**

Harrington & Richardson Pardner Pump 20-gauge shotgun.  
Valued at \$189.00, generously donated by NH State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation

Chairman Stohl welcomed & thanked Representative Laflamme, Deputy Ranking Member, House Fish, Game & Marine Resources Committee, for attending the meeting.

**LATE ITEMS:**

1.) Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries Division, came before the Commission requesting to expend \$5,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account, for title production work by Sulloway & Hollis, in order to retain this Title Agent & secure the estimated price on a parcel of land on Success Pond that holds public rights to the water.

Much discussion ensued.

The Commission expressed concern over exactly what the \$5,000 title production work & research entailed. Dianne responded that she would reach out for clarification, however, reported that she anticipated that there was extensive research to be done, as there are many landowners on the 12-mile road, which will result in more title research.

Dianne reported that “Title production” means the work of researching title (searching for and retrieving all relevant instruments and plans from the registry of deeds, reviewing all of said instruments and plans, identifying the various rights and encumbrances potentially affecting title, and summarizing or “abstracting” those that could affect the real property rights to be acquired by the title agent’s client) and producing a title insurance commitment, which among other things lists those encumbrances and other potential third-party rights against which the title insurance company will not insure title without some further action to remove such “exceptions from coverage.”

Dianne reported that the reason that the cost estimate was \$5,000 and not \$500 is entirely due to the complexity of the title to the land in Success and to the Success Pond Road easement. The title is very complex because it has been non-linear for a long time: the entire area is comprised of 100+ year old privately owned logging tracts, which means that all of the roads and camp parcels were created as needed by layer upon layer of private agreements over many decades—not planned out in advance or even coordinated as part of any kind of master development plan, and that land changes hand much less often and in much larger tracts than in other areas—which results in legacy landowner agreements carrying forward over a much longer time than they might otherwise and far fewer opportunities to correct outdated title issues or generally clean up title. Also, the Coos County Registry of Deeds, compared to every other county in NH, has by far the most limited amount of instruments of record available to be searched online. That means that any title search for land in Coos County going back more than 15 or 20 years is going to require someone to travel to Lancaster in person and search the paper records, which takes significantly more billable time than a search over the internet. In the case of current or former logging tracts like Success, the searches can go back 50-100 years or more depending on the rights involved.

Commissioner Hodgson moved to approve expending \$5,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account, as presented today, for title production work by Sulloway & Hollis, in order to retain this Title Agent & secure the estimated price on a parcel of land on Success Pond that holds public rights to the water and Commissioner Temple seconded.

Discussion ensued as to whether \$5,000 would be enough for the title work & research.

At this time, Commissioner Green moved to amend the motion, to expend up to \$7,000 for title production work & research & Commissioner Price seconded.

A vote was taken on the amendment to expend up to \$7,000 for title production work & research by Sulloway & Hollis, in order to retain this Title Agent & secure the estimated price on a parcel of land on Success Pond that holds public rights to the water and carried with 8 in favor 1 opposed (B. Temple).

A vote was taken on the original motion requesting to expend \$5,000, amended to \$7,000, for title production work & research by Sulloway & Hollis, in order to retain this Title Agent & secure the estimated price on a parcel of land on Success Pond that holds public rights to the water and carried with 8 in favor, 1 opposed (B. Temple).

Dianne apologized for the late item and reported that she would keep the Commission updated and report any updates, as she learns of them.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

- 1.) Financial Statement was not discussed aloud.
- 2.) Jim Oehler, Habitat Program Supervisor, came before the Commission and provided an overview of the Wildlife Division's Habitat Program, including staff and their individual responsibilities. (See attached presentation).
- 3.) Colonel Jordan, Sergeant Kevin Bronson & Conservation Officer Graham Courtney, of the Law Enforcement Division, came before the Commission and provided an overview of side scan sonar equipment and its capabilities.

Colonel Jordan invited everyone to the Department's boat launch site on Newfound Lake to witness a demonstration of the equipment after the meeting adjourned.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Chairman Stohl reported that the Commission & Executive Director Mason received a rulemaking petition from the NH Wildlife Coalition relative to implementing mandatory reporting requirements for the take of furbearing animals by firearms or bow & arrow.

Commissioner Green moved that the Commission received the petition from the NH Wildlife Coalition and referred it to the Wildlife Division for review & input at the October 12, 2021 Commission Meeting. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner Green reported that he has been receiving calls & correspondence from constituents regarding the desire for online deer registration.

Director Mason responded that the Department is currently in the process of having internal discussions on the issue. He reported that there is some concern over biological samples not being obtained with that method of registration.

Director Mason further reported that there would be a meeting in the near future to discuss check stations, as well. He reported that he would keep the Commission updated.

Commissioner Green reported that it would be helpful to see a list of the pros & cons of online deer registration from the Wildlife Division.

Commissioner Price reported that she reached out to Dianne Timmins, Inland Fisheries Division Chief, to report that she was contacted by a constituent with concern that the draw

down at Dan Hole Pond in Ossipee, NH, was negatively impacting lake trout spawning. Commissioner Price reported that Dianne would be working with the Department of Environmental Services to address the issue and would keep the Commission updated.

Commissioner Price further reported that she visited the Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program at the Owl Brook Hunter Education Center, in Holderness, NH. She stated, “It was great to meet staff & participants.” She further reported that the Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program would be held at Geneva Point, in Moultonborough, NH, next year and that she plans to visit by boat.

In addition, Commissioner Price reported that she spoke with Karen Bordeau, Pheasant Project Leader, who assists with obtaining biological samples when checking in/registering deer, who also has concerns that online deer registration may prohibit the biologist in getting critical data from those samples.

Commissioner Temple reported the passing of former Sullivan County Fish & Game Commissioner, Donald Clarke, of Claremont, NH. He reported that Don served as Interim Executive Director, of the Fish & Game Department, in addition to being a County Commissioner. He stated, “Don was a very big supporter of Barry Conservation Camp.”

#### **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:**

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

Commissioner Green, Chair; Commissioners: DeBow, Price & Hodgson  
Staff members: Paul Sanderson & Kevin Jordan

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

Commissioner Lachance, Chair; Commissioners: Green & Temple.  
Staff member: Cheri Patterson

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

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

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

Commissioner Temple, Chair; Commissioners: McInnis, Lachance & Caveney.  
Staff member: Dianne Timmins

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

Commissioner DeBow, Chair; Commissioners: Hodgdon & Price.  
Staff members: Nicola Whitley & Dianne Timmins.

**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.

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

Director Mason reported that he had the opportunity to meet with the Executive Director of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies recently and had a good informative meeting.

He reported that he toured the Kelsey Notch ATV trail with Senator Hennessey, of Littleton, NH, to look into some reported safety issues.

He reported that he toured the Powder Mill Fish Hatchery in New Durham, NH, with Governor Sununu, to review potential upgrades needed to meet EPA standards for acceptable phosphorous discharge levels.

In addition, Director Mason reported that he has met with individuals from the NH Audubon Society & The Nature Conservancy, to discuss conservation issues.

Director Mason reported that he attended the Timberland Owner's Association Meeting with Mark Beauchesne, Outdoor & Promotional Coordinator/Landowner Relations Program Coordinator. He reported that Commissioner Caveney was in attendance, as well.

He reported that he has met with the Dean of the NH Law School, to look into developing an internship for a law student to work on legislative issues & rulemaking, to assist Conservation Officers with legal work.

He further reported that he would be attending the Law Enforcement Awards Ceremony at F&G HQ on Saturday, September 18, 2021.

Director Mason reported that he met with the Lewis Porter, Commissioner, VT Fish & Wildlife Department, and recently toured their new hatchery and viewed how their hatchery system operates.

In closing, Director Mason reported that he would be attending the North Woods Law Throwdown Softball Game on September 25, 2021, at the Delta Dental Stadium. He reported that the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Game Wardens would be taking on the NH Fish & Game Conservation Officers in a charity softball game. He reported that proceeds benefit the NH & ME Operation Game Thief Chapters, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Maine, and New Hampshire's Barry Conservation Camp.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

There were no public comments.

At this time, 3:12 p.m., Commissioner Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

---

Eric Stohl, Chairman  
NH Fish & Game Commission