

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

MAY 10, 2022 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: Seabrook Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room, 99 Lafayette Road, Seabrook, NH.

Commissioners Present: E. Stohl, M. Lachance, C. Hodgdon, M. Hodgson, J. Caveney, S. Price, A.J. DeRosa, P. DeBow, R. Green.

Commissioners absent/excused: P. McInnis & B. Temple

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman Stohl called the meeting to order at 1:00 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 April 12, 2022 Commission Meeting Minutes and Commissioner DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.
- 2.) Commissioner Lachance moved to accept the donation of \$50.00 from Elizabeth Chiasson, to assist in purchasing safety equipment for the Search & Rescue Team and Commissioner Green seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.
- 3.) Commissioner Green moved to accept the donation of \$1,200.00 from Sally Merrill, in memory of her late husband, Sergeant Donald Merrill, to purchase first aid kits for all Conservation Officers and Commissioner Lachance seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.
- 4.) Commissioner Green moved to accept the donation of \$740.00 from Hannah Verville, for use by the Department's canine team for safety equipment & training and Commissioner Caveney seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

- 1.) There were no questions on the monthly financial statement.
- 2.) Captain Michael Eastman introduced Officer Richard Crouse of District 5 and his dog, Koda, a two-year old American black lab, who Officer Crouse adopted from Rescue Incorporated, Waldon, MA. Officer Crouse reported that the canine program is funded through The Wildlife Heritage Foundation of NH & other private donations. He reported that Koda attended a 6-week training in gunpowder detection, evidence detection, fish & wildlife detection, tracking, obedience and agility and received certification from the VT Police Academy Certification & Training. He reported that the Department receives approximately 80-90 calls per year requesting assistance from our canines.

Commissioner Hodgson inquired as to the required training in order to maintain certification.

Officer Crouse responded that the canine team trains 4 days per month, usually every Monday, with all dogs & handlers gathering together to train and practice every category the dogs certified in. He further reported that they are required to train 2 days a month and recertify once a year at the VT Police Academy Certification & Training Center.

The Commission thanked Officer Crouse for the presentation.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

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

Commissioner Green, Chair; Commissioners: DeBow, Price & Hodgson
Staff members: Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley

Commissioner Green reported that the committee has not met since the last meeting.

He reported that Marty Mobley, Legal Coordinator, would be giving a legislative update and FIS update at the monthly Commission Meetings.

Legislative Update

The first bills have been signed into law:

[HB 571](#) (Hoit Road Marsh), now Chapter #30, takes effect July 2nd.

[HB 1323](#) (Hike Safe cards), now Chapter #38, also takes effect July 2nd.

“Regular” session is over

Any bills amended by the second Chamber go back to the Committee in the originating Chamber for concurrence, non-concurrence, or Committee of Conference (C of C)

May 26th – Legislature meets to vote on C of C reports. **Last Day of 2022 Session.**

Bills of Particular Interest still in play:

[HB 490](#) (game cameras) – Senate amendment removes written permission of landowner and adds standards for tree stands

[HB 1269](#) (study committees) – Senate amendment restores membership on ACMF to seacoast “tidewater towns” residents with marine fishery experience

[HB 1299](#) (wildlife importation) – Senate amendment removes confusing language and makes clear the appeal process for a permit denial

[HB 1554-FN](#) (OHRVs on-line registration) – Senate amendment sets implementation date of September 2025

Fis Update

In process:

Fis 302.04-.07 &.10 (Waterfowl) – hearing was March 30th; exempt rules adopted and filed with JLCAR April 16th; sets new season dates and bag limits = to federal regs; sent to Commission for “info only”.

Fis 303.02 & .03 (Small Fur-bearers) – hearing is May 26th; set to expire June 5th; re-adopting with no changes to season or bag limits; Commission was “consulted” at April meeting.

Fis 304.01 & .08-.12 (Bear Damage) – hearing is June 22nd; new rules (RSA 207:23-a) to describe claims procedures for agricultural damage by wildlife; Commission was “informed only” at April meeting.

Fis 600 Sections (marine fishing) – hearing was April 5th; set to expire February 28; at JLCAR June 17th; re-adoption with no changes; Commission was “informed only” at April meeting.

Fis 602.09 (gear marking) – hearing was April 5th; exempt rules adopted and filed with JLCAR April 8th; sets line colors and marking = to federal regs; Commission was “informed only” at April meeting.

Fis 1400 (non-game) – hearing in June 2nd; set to expire June 5th; re-adoption with changes to include amphibians and update scientific names for certain toads; Commission was “consulted” at April meeting.

Next up:

Fis 1006 (disbursing mitigation funds) – new rules; mandated adoption date of Oct. 9th by SB 129 from last Session; currently in drafting; language to be sent to Commission for “info only” in July.

Fis 807 and Fis 1110.09 & .10 (derelict gear clean-up) – new rules; mandated by SB 146 from last Session; will be scheduled for hearing in July/August (depending on vacations); Commission was “consulted” at April meeting.

Rules Mandated by 2022 Legislation (not yet started):

Fis 301.033 (on-line deer presentation) - [HB 1230-FN](#) – no date

Rules for the requirements, procedures, and fees for the use of the online registration system

Fis 803 (wildlife importation) - [HB 1299](#) – no date

Rules for the denial of permit appeals process

Fis 1106.07 (Hike Safe cards) - [HB 1323](#) – no date

Fee was in statute, but now must be in rules

Fis 1600 (non-motorized boat access) - [HB 1528](#) – no date

Rules for accepting donations to support development and maintenance of such access areas.

Fis 1502.04 (OHRVs on-line registration) - [HB 1554-FN](#) – September 1, 2025

Does not specify rules, but mandates the establishment of procedures to enable this registration

In closing, Commissioner Green asked Commissioners on the Legislative Committee to let him know what dates they are not available this summer so meetings can be scheduled accordingly.

Commissioner Hodgson inquired as to whether there could be a debriefing among the legislative meeting to discuss what worked & what didn't.

Commissioner Green reported that he planned on the debriefing taking place at the first meeting.

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

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

Commissioner Caveney reported that the committee met prior to the April Commission Meeting & had a productive meeting. He reported that the committee reviewed pages 11-23 of the Commission Handbook regarding policies & procedures. He reported that he would be sending out another email asking for comments.

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

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

Commissioner Hodgdon reported that he distributed the latest version of the draft core tenets of the strategic plan, and would be looking for a motion to adopt it today.

He provided a status update as follows:

- Asked Senior Staff to provide feedback to the draft core tenets, which was last worked on in March. He reported that the committee received 3 comments below:

- Recruitment Section- there is a desire to highlight the fact that that recruitment of hunters, anglers & trappers is imperative.
- Add - when we are recruiting people into what we do, we want to make sure that instilled in them is a strong conservation ethic. It will not help our mission if we are simply flooded with thousands & thousands of new comers who do not come with the appreciation & understanding of how conservation works & how we are going to protect the resource.
- Add – at end – two comments combined, both related in a major way to what is proposed here.

Core Tenets- there should be recognition that staff is or among one of the more important assets the department has, meaning they have to be trained & equipped to function at their very highest level. In order to do that, there has to be a sense of collaboration & mutual respect throughout the department, which we are constantly focused on.

He further reported that the committee met yesterday, May 9, 2022, as a committee, with senior staff, and discussed the next phase of the Strategic Planning development process, which is an external call to the public as to what they want to see in the plan, along with an internal inventory & assessment process. Yesterday's focus was on the internal inventory & assessment process, with all divisions having representation. Commissioner Hodgdon thanked the Director for having this meeting. At the end of the meeting, committee members met & reviewed the draft core tenets. He reported that the idea & importance of adopting these core tenets soon is that they will be used to stimulate discussion with the public and use them internally to accomplish our mission.

Commissioner Hodgson reported that she liked the addition of last piece and questioned whether it should be moved up in the core tenets document.

Commissioner Hodgdon moved to adopt the strategic planning process, as provided today, and Commissioner Hodgson seconded.

Much discussed ensued.

Commissioner Caveney asked for clarification that the strategic planning process is an authority/responsibility of the Commission. He thought it would be nice if it were reflected in the core tenets document.

Chairman Stohl responded & cited RSA 206:4a, II, as it charges the Commission with this responsibility. Commissioner Hodgdon agreed with Chairman Stohl.

Commissioner Hodgson suggested mentioning 206:4a, II, being the Commission's responsibility, as a header to the core tenets document, as it may be more suited there.

Commissioner Green stated that he was uncomfortable taking a vote on this & while he respects the amount of work done, there is no mention of the Commission in the document.

Commissioner DeRosa clarified that the core tenets would be used to gather comments from staff & the public to build the strategic plan. He agreed that adding a header to the core tenets page indicating such responsibility of the Commission, citing the RSA, which could easily be done.

Commissioner Price moved to amend the motion by adding “any commission communication relative to the building of the strategic plan will cite that language, *Pursuant to RSA: 206:4a, II*”, Commissioner DeRosa seconded.

A vote was taken on the above amendment and was unanimous in the affirmative.

A vote was taken on the motion, as amended, and was unanimous in the affirmative.

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

No meeting.

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

Commissioner DeBow, Chair; Commissioners: Hodgdon, Price & DeRosa.
Staff members: Dianne Timmins, Kevin Jordan & Cheri Patterson

Commissioner DeBow reported that the committee voted on the award recipients at the last meeting. He reported that it would be approximately 6 weeks for the awards to be made, as the vendor has changed hands & is short-handed.

He reported that he would keep the committee updated as to the awards presentation schedule.

OLD BUSINESS:

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 Green stated that he was happy to report that with much time & effort by many people & several agencies, the Town of Deering has now suspended all parking fees & has opened up access to Deering Reservoir to everyone, not just town residents.

Commissioner Green thanked Executive Councilor Wheeler & Attorney General Formella for their assistance in getting this resolved.

Commissioner Price reported that she was the proud recipient of a Trapper Education Certificate of completion. She thanked the NH Trappers Association, and stated that she found the class very informative & learned a lot. She stated, “I feel better prepared discussing trapping issues & understanding trapping regulations.”

She further reported that the NH Trappers Association would be donating a sport backpack & several other raffle items to the B.O.W. (Becoming an Outdoor Woman Program)

She announced that there would be a “Log-A-Load Fun Shoot” event, held at the Green Mountain Shooting Preserve in Effingham, NH, on Saturday, August 20, 2022, where members of the NH Timberland Owners Association (NHTOA) and friends fire their shotguns at soaring clay birds & enjoy an outdoor picnic, while raising money to benefit the Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth (ChaD).

Commissioner DeRosa reported that he visited a turkey check station and heard overwhelming comments for the desire to open the turkey season sooner & close it sooner, as well. He stated that he was not sure what it means biologically, however, he wanted to bring it to the Commission’s attention as we come into rulemaking.

Chairman Stohl thanked the Selectmen of Seabrook for allowing the Commission the use of their nice facility & thanked them for lunch, as well.

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

Director Mason reported on the following:

- Attended DNCR’s SCORP Meeting (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan). He reported that he noticed there was only a partial view of what F&G contributes to outdoor recreation and that there would be a more complete assessment conducted of F&G’s involvement.
- He reported that Discover Wild NH Day was a success, with approximately 8,000 people in attendance and 85 exhibits. He reported that the grant that supports Discover Wild NH Day comes from the Wildlife Heritage Foundation.
- Avian Flu – First eaglet has tested positive for H5.
- Attended a meeting put on by the USFWS relative to how we get our federal funds & where, which is from the excise tax on hunting, fishing & boating equipment. He reported that they are putting together a program that will expand interactions with Fish & Game Departments & industry partners. He reported that the excise tax is the single largest expense Smith & Wesson pays.

- He reported that he met with the Governor, who advised all departments that the labor market was going to be tight for the foreseeable future and to look for efficiencies in delivering our services, increase technologies & streamline processes.
- Governor Sununu, Councilor Kenney & Senator Gray, all attended the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the Downing's Landing Boat Launch on Alton Bay in May of 2022.
- Received a request from the Yankee Fishermen's Cooperative to change our commercial landing license to encourage out of state participation in tuna tournaments. He reported that it is not able to happen for this year; however, the department will be coming back to the Commission with possible changes to legislation to address that.
- HDR Engineering finished their second round of hatchery tours as party of the study. He reported that the department recently received \$55 million in ARPA funding to rebuild the hatchery systems.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Steve Angers, Conway, NH, reported that anglers that he has interacted with are thrilled with the transparency from the Director & the Inland Fisheries Division by posting the new stocking reports & explaining the rainbow trout situation.

Jim, Yankee Fishermen Cooperative, expressed concerns over the 100- trap lobster license & the desire for the requirement to be one permit, one boat.

He was told that this change would require a rule change and that the department would take it under consideration.

At this time, 3:10 p.m., Commissioner Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner Lachance seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Eric Stohl, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission