

**NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT**  
**AUGUST 15, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

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

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

Commissioners absent/excused:

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman E. 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 Chairman reserves the right to limit comment to the extent necessary for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

1.) Commissioner R. Green moved to approve the July 18, 2023 Commission Minutes as written, and Commissioner C. Hodgdon seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Consent Agenda – The following items were listed as consent agenda items to expedite action on routine matters, which may not require public discussion. Commission members may remove certain items, if further public input or discussion is necessary.

Commissioner R. Green moved to accept consent agenda items 2a & 2b, as presented below, and Commissioner J. Caveney seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2a.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$25.00 from Rebecca Gleason, Athol, MA, in memory of Maurice “Moose” Simpson, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$100.00 from Christopher & Rebecca Bean in memory of Caleb Sweatt of Whitefield, NH, for use by the Department’s Dive Team.

3.) At this time, Commissioner S. Price moved to take Action Item #3 off the table (The request to accept the donation of the Mooney Clarke Boat Access Area on the Pemigewasset River in Bristol, NH, from the Central Rivers Power (CRP, LLC) Company, valued at approximately \$89,400), and Commissioner R. Green seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner R. Green moved to accept the donation of the Mooney Clarke Boat Access Area on the Pemigewasset River in Bristol, NH, from the Central Rivers Power (CRP, LLC) Company, valued at approximately \$89,400 and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded.

Commissioner J. Caveney inquired as to what exactly the Commission was voting on.

Attorney Aslin responded that the Commission had before them the gift of property, the fee interest in the property. He reported that there is a road to public waters easement on top of the property and if accepted, it would give ownership of the land underneath that easement to the State of NH, overseen by the NH Fish & Game Department.

He clarified that the easement would stay with the Town of Bristol and that the ownership of the fee is what the Commission is voting on today.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon, inquired if the Town of Bristol could change the easement to limit access to the public at large.

Attorney Aslin responded that the easement created in 1971 guarantees the right to access public waters, and that the Town has an obligation to maintain the road and could not discontinue doing so on their own.

Commissioner M. Hodgson inquired about the title & chain of custody, and asked what Attorney Aslin could offer her to assure her to feel more confident that everything is clean and as it should be.

He responded that in the 1970's the property was owned by PSNH (Public Service of NH), and never changed hands until recently to the current company in 2018, who has a clear title to the fee.

Chairman Stohl called for a vote on the above motion, which passed unanimously in the affirmative.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

1.) Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, reviewed the June 30, 2023 Financial Statement with the Commission.

She further reported that she would be providing an informational presentation before the Commission at the December Commission Meeting.

2.) John Magee, Fisheries Program Supervisor, provided a presentation on the Fisheries Habitat Account.

He explained that requests to expend monies from this account require Commission approval. He provided an overview of the Habitat Program, to include the rating method/criteria that projects are required to meet in order to be considered, the program approach, maps highlighting fish habitat projects and their locations, etc., (See attached for full presentation).

**Rating Method:**

1.) The project protects healthy fisheries habitat in a natural aquatic system. The following (existing and potential future) attributes will be assessed:

- Riparian buffers.
- Impervious area in the watershed upstream of the project area.
- Percentage of area in watershed protected.

- Number of impacting stream crossings per mile of stream.
  - Proportion of free flowing (no dams) habitat.
  - Percentage watershed in agriculture.
  - Other attributes as necessary.
- 2.) The project re-establishes the natural functions, processes, or linkages among the components of the watershed-
- 0 pts.  
Somewhat = 1-14 pts.  
Fully so = 15 pts.
- 3.) The project reconnects fragmented aquatic habitat that provides fish with access to historic spawning, nursery, or rearing grounds.
- 4.) The project increases the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad diversity of fish and other aquatic species-
- 0 species = 0 pts.  
1 species = 5 pts.  
2-3 species = 10 pts.  
3 or more species = 15 pts.
- 5.) The project increases recreational fishing opportunities-
- None = 0 pts.  
Somewhat = 5 pts.  
High = 10 pts.
- 6.) The project benefits fish species in greatest need of conservation-
- None = 0 pts.  
1 species = 5 pts.  
2 species = 10 pts.
- 7.) The project targets fish habitat that is identified as a priority in a formal document-
- NO = 0 pts.  
YES = 5 pts.
- 8.) The project is using matching funds that equals or exceeds the amount of Fisheries Habitat account requested funding-
- No matching funds = 0 pts.  
1:1 match = 2 pts.  
2:1 match = 3 pts.  
>2:1 match = 5 pts.
- 9.) The project is being officially supported by multiple partners-
- 1 partner = 1 pt.  
2-3 partners = 3 pts.  
>3 partners = 5 pts.

**An overview of the Habitat Program:**

- One State-wide Fish Habitat Biologist.
- Several Regional Fish Biologists –but mostly one who works in habitat program.
- Multiple project partners on most projects.
- Fisheries Habitat Account –RSA 214:1-g.
- \$1 from each license sold goes into the account.
- ~\$150,000 each year.

**Program Approach:**

- Common theme: use natural processes.
- Fish are adapted to these processes, so the best way to restore/enhance habitat is to mimic these processes.
- Focus on Watersheds as much as possible.
- Typically costs much less to let Nature do most of the work.
- Biggest angling bang for the buck.
- Rating Method.

Commissioner M. Hodgson thanked John for the presentation and stated that it was helpful information for the Commission to have.

**COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:**

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

**Commissioner Price, Chair;** Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & Green.

**Staff members:** Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee did not meet.

She reported that the Commission needed to vote on Fis. 1205.01, relative to sporting club youth pheasant event.

Marty Mobley, Legal Coordinator, reported that all but one paragraph of Fis. 1205.01 expired in May of this year; no changes, but it looks like new language since it has all expired. She reported that the hearing would be on September 20, 2023.

Commissioner S. Price moved to support Fis 1205.01, relative to sporting club youth pheasant event and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

At this time, Marty Mobley reviewed the four legislative proposals that will require the Commission to take a position on at the September Commission Meeting:

**Proposals:**

**Bear Registration Agents** – puts in statute the authority to establish bear registration stations and to set fees charged by the agents in rules.

**Deer Seals Technical Bill** – amends the language in several statutes to remove reference to “deer seals” since on-line deer registration does not use seals but does have “confirmation numbers”; also corrects language for the publication of deer registration stations.

**Fingerprinting Guide Applicants** – allows for the collection of guide applicant fingerprints so national background checks to be conducted.

**Tuna Tournament License** – establishes a license for landing a tuna in NH for non-residents participating in a tournament.

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

**Commissioner Caveney, Chair;** Commissioners: Lachance, Temple, Hodgson & Titone.  
**Staff member:** Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the committee would be meeting in the near future.

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

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

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that he received all the stakeholder survey responses and that the committee met on August 10, 2023 to review summaries, narrowing in on key themes. He reported that the next step was to connect each Commissioner with a Senior Staff member and review the feedback.

He reported that he emailed the response summaries to the full Commission.

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

**Commissioner Green, Chair;** Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, Temple & Lachance.  
**Staff member:** Dianne Timmins.

Commissioner R. Green reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting and discussed the Mooney Clark boat ramp donation.

He further reported that the committee would like to look into the infrastructure of the hatcheries and requested copies of the recent hatchery studies in order to have that discussion.

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

**Commissioner DeRosa, Chair;** Commissioners: DeBow, Hodgdon & Price.  
**Staff members:** Dan Bergeron, Kevin Jordan & Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee has not met. He reported that the Commission Awards process was underway.

**LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Price.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee has not met.

**NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Hodgdon.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that the committee reviewed an online tool to view all DOT (Department of Transportation) owned properties eligible for disposal. This mapper will allow properties to be viewed visually, with the ability to highlight priority parcels before considering disposal. He further reported that John Magee, Fisheries Supervisor, serves on this committee, as well, and provides invaluable information.

In addition, Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that he was present at the presentation on the Exeter Dam Removal provided by Connor O'Donnell, of the Marine Division. He stated that Conner did an excellent job explaining how the removal of the dam affected herring & their migration.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:** Commissioner J. Caveney brought up the topic of Carbon Credits on the CT Lakes Headwaters Tract and asked how something so big could get this far with no discussion. He reported that Bluesource Sustainable Forest Company, new owners of the 146,000 acre Connecticut Headwaters Conservation Tract in Northern NH, say their focus is on acquiring former timberlands and selling credits toward decarbonizing. Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the forestry industry was shocked to learn of this. He stated that he felt the Commission had a lot to learn and stated, "We cannot have our heads in the sand regarding this."

Director Mason reported that DNCR (Department of Natural & Cultural Resources) is the easement holder on the property and reported that it was not clear yet if this would be allowed or not under the current language. He reported that Commissioner Stewart is involved in discussions and expects an update on their proposed logging plan for the upcoming year in October.

Commissioner E. Stohl stated, "This isn't going to stop and has a lot of strings attached to it." He further reported that this was a serious issue, as Pittsburg would lose a great deal of money in timber taxes due to this.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa stated, “I’m not a fan of the tract all coming up at the same age, as a variety of species require various levels of forest growth.”

Commissioner C. Hodgdon requested that Director Mason provide the Commission with copies of the easement, as well as the forest plan.

Director Mason agreed to do so.

Commissioner M. Hodgson inquired about the status of the online deer registration option.

Director Mason responded that it is ready to be implemented, and has been well advertised in digest, and in the form of a press release.

**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 R. Green reported that he was contacted by Jennifer Beck, of the Wilton Conservation Commission, who inquired if the Commission would be interested in providing bio’s on each Commissioner and sharing it with conservation commissions across the state. He stated that he thought it was a good idea and felt it was a great opportunity for the public to learn/know what the Commission is.

Commissioner M. Hodgson recommended that the Public Engagement & Education committee further discuss this topic and bring the result of that discussion before the full Commission for a final decision.

In addition, Commissioner R. Green reported that he had a constituent inquire as to the possibility of having consistency on discounts for hunting & fishing licenses for senior citizens.

Director Mason responded that it was probably not wise, as the department would lose money, and further reported that laws/rules establish license fees and any changes would require a rule change.

Commissioner S. Price reported that for the second year in a row she was able to secure a donation to BOW (Becoming an Outdoor Woman) Program from the Melvin Village Marina, consisting of floating key fobs and pens.

In addition, she reported that she attended the Timberland Owners Association Fundraising Sporting Clay Event at the Green Mountain Shooting Preserve, with the proceeds to benefit the Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth.

She further reported that she would be attending the Ruffed Grouse Society Dinner on Saturday, August 19, 2023.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he visited the North Country and spent some time with Carol Foss of the NH Audubon Society and learned a great deal about the Rusty Blackbird. He stated that it was a fun day and that he intends to spend more time with the NH Audubon Society.

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that he received a call from Joey Parsons, Guide Applicant, who expressed some concerns over the Guide Exam process and inquired as to the status of his inquiry, which he made at a prior Commission Meeting.

Colonel Jordan responded that the Department chose to tighten up the requirements to become a guide and partnered with the Guides Association, as they are the only professional group in the state that was already doing that. He reported that the exam is given by the Law Enforcement Division, with one member of the Guide's Association participating on panel. He stated that the test is not easy, as we want to be sure that the applicant knows map & compass, first aid, proper firearm handling, etc., He further reported that if an applicant fails the exam twice, they are required to start the whole process over. At the current time, there is a high pass rate of the applicants.

Commissioner S. Price reported that she has had communications with Mr. Parsons. She stated that she felt it was a conflict of interest for the Guide's Association to be on the exam panel. She feels that it is okay for the Guide's Association to be involved, however, not asking the questions. She told Mr. Parsons that if the Commission were to receive a petition or it comes up in rulemaking, she would ask for further detailed information on the process.

Commissioner M. Hodgson inquired about the metrics & the failure rate. She further stated that she would only ask for that information if the Commission were to receive a petition and such.

Colonel Jordan responded that he could put something together; however, the pass rate is much better.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Director Mason reported that he attended two retirement parties for staff employees.

He reported that the Governor and Council Meetings are taking place across the state, with the most recent meeting being at the Woodman Museum in Dover, NH. He reported that they have science exhibits, artifacts, animal exhibits, and the last Mountain Lion shot in NH on display, as well.

He further reported that he attended the bill signing of HB-119, relative to homestead food operation licensure and making provisions for the sale of meat from uninspected bison, elk, or red deer, which took place at the Red Deer Farm, Plymouth, NH, with Governor Sununu and Commissioner Jasper.

He reported that he attended the NH Trapper's Association Board Meeting.



He reminded everyone that the Department would have booths at the Hopkinton and Lancaster Fairs, and encouraged everyone to stop by to visit.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

Linda Dionne, Raymond, NH – wished to clarify her comments at last month’s Commission Meeting. She stated that none of the proceeds from the sale of hunting & fishing licenses goes to the Nongame & Endangered Species Program. She further commented that she did not see Commissioner Price’s name listed as a donor to the Nongame Program.

Commissioner S. Price reported that there was a check box on the hunting & fishing license form to donate to the Nongame & Endangered Species Program, which she has done.

Linda further stated, “The Fish Habitat Presentation was great!”

In addition, she further stated that she would like to see the department receive more than \$1.00 from every fishing license sold into the Fish Habitat Account.

Bill Carney, Bow, NH (Former Merrimack County F&G Commissioner), stated “I was involved in creating the Fish Habitat Legislation back in 1997 and we requested the fee be \$5.00, it was reduced to \$2.50, essentially reduced to \$1.00. We have tried to increase the fee over the years, however, it was unsuccessful, although I am all for it!”

At this time, 3:25 p.m., Commissioner R. Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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Eric Stohl, Chairman  
NH Fish & Game Commission