

## NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

### MAY 16, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: Town of Seabrook, 99 Lafayette Road, Seabrook, NH 03874.

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

Commissioners absent/excused: M. Lachance

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman R. Green called the meeting to order at 1:02p.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.

Chairman Green thanked Selectwoman Kyle for hosting the meeting and recognized Representative Kahn, as well, and thanked him for his continued support.

Representative Kahn thanked the Commissioners for their dedication and work they do and offered to host the yearly May Commissioner's Meeting at their facility in Seabrook.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1.) Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to approve the April 18, 2023 Commission Minutes and Commissioner S. Price seconded.

Commissioner M. Hodgson moved to amend the first, fifth & sixth paragraph on page 5, of the April 18, 2023 Commission Minutes to read as follows, Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

*At this time, Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to amend the motion by striking the recommendation from the proposal to remove the current requirement to register a turkey before taking another and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded.*

*The vote taken on the amended motion to strike the recommendation from the proposal to remove the current requirement to register a turkey before taking another carried with 9 in favor, 1 opposed (P. DeBow).*

*The vote taken on the original motion to approve the turkey proposals as presented, with the amendment to strike the recommendation from the proposal to remove the current requirement to register a turkey before taking another carried with 7 in favor, 3 opposed (E. Stohl, S. Price & R. Green).*

2.) Commissioner B. Temple moved to accept the following donations made to the Search & Rescue Account and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

- Sally Merrill - \$1,200.00
  - Kristine Barker - \$ 100.00
  - Genesis Circle Health Congregational Church - \$ 35.00
  - Martha Burnham - \$ 25.00
- Total: \$1,360.00

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that Sally Merrill donates to the department in honor of her deceased husband, Sgt. Don Merrill, on an annual basis. Colonel Jordan followed up by reporting that she reaches out to inquire what the division needs and purchases an item to donate in his memory.

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 A.J. DeRosa moved to accept consent agenda items 3, 3a – 3f, as presented below, and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

3.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$300.00 made to the Inland Fisheries Division from The Nashua Fly Casters Association (\$200.00) & Theodore & Diane Pelletier (\$100.00), member of the Board.

3a.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$200.00 from Rick Fadden, Stoddard, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

3b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from Christine Jeziorski, Forest, VA, in memory of Cathy Schombs, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

3c.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$50.00 from Candida & Raymond Burnham, Canaan, NH, in memory of Bernside (Bernie) Bartlett, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

3d.) The Commission accepted the following donations made in memory of Thomas Slavin Rathke, Laconia, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- The Ferreira Family, Hudson, NH - \$200.00
  - Joshua Perell & Jan Loeser, Davie, FL- \$100.00
- Total: \$300.00

3e.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$35.00 from Gordon Vittum & Zita Bello, Ashland, NH, in memory of Mark Ober Sr., Ashland, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

3f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$10,000 to the Nongame Program from Barbara Virgin in memory of Stephen & Audrey Virgin.

4.) Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to accept the donation of six Zoll AED plus fully automatic units, valued at \$10,614.00, from the New Hampshire ATV Club, for distribution to Districts statewide & utilized at off highway recreational vehicle accident scenes as needed and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

1.) No financial statement this month. Commissioner C. Hodgdon inquired if the monthly statement could be included in the Commission packets in the future.

Director Mason responded that Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, has been busy working on year-end closing business and would get the financial statement to them as soon as possible.

Chairman R. Green reminded the Commissioners to submit their mileage reimbursements to Tanya as soon as possible, if not processed by June 30, 2023; you will unfortunately forfeit your reimbursement.

**COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:**  
**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE:**

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

**Commissioner Price, Chair;** Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & Stohl.  
**Staff members:** Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner S. Price asked Marty Mobley, Legal Coordinator, to provide an update on pertinent legislation before the Commission.

Marty reported that SB-14, relative to the use of game cameras & SB-15, relative to tree stands, were exec' d on today, May 16, 2023.

She further reported that Fis. 606.01, restrictions on clams; adds a prohibition on shucking at sea.

She reported that Cheri Patterson, Chief, Marine Division, was not present at the meeting today to speak to this, as she was out ill.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that there was discussion on this at the Marine Advisory Committee Meeting. He reported that due to concerns that shells would wash up onto beaches during storms, there was an amendment to prohibit the dumping of clamshells in state waters.

There was question whether to take a position on this today or to wait until next month to confer with Cheri Patterson. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner M. Hodgson reminded the Commission that Commissioner J. Titone sits on the Marine Advisory Committee and has the most up to date information.

At this time, Commissioner P. DeBow moved to postpone voting until the June 20, 2023 Commission Meeting to confer with Cheri Patterson & take action on Fis. 606.01, restrictions on clams; adding a prohibition on shucking at sea, and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote carried with 6 in favor, 4 opposed (E. Stohl, J. Titone, M. Hodgson & R. Green).

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

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

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the committee has not met.

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

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

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that the Core Tenet Letters & Stakeholder Outreach questions pertaining to the creation of the next 5-year Strategic Plan were mailed to non-profit organizations.

He recognized Tanya for her support in getting the letters mailed out to everyone.

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

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

Commissioner B. Temple reported that the committee would be meeting prior to the June 20, 2023 Commission Meeting at F&G HQ.

**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.

**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 has not met.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Green reported that he has appointed Commissioners J. Caveney & M. Lachance to serve on the Nominating Committee, as the Commission will be voting on a new slate of officers at the June 20, 2023 Commission Meeting.

He further reported that Commissioner M. Hodgson was nominated for another term as Rockingham County Commissioner.

In addition, he reported that his term would be up June 30, 2023, and he is not seeking another term as Hillsborough County Commissioner. He followed up by saying that he would continue to serve on the Commission until a replacement for Hillsborough County was found.

**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 S. Price reported that she & Commissioner M. Lachance would be at the Winni-Derby Awards Ceremony on Sunday, May 21, 2023, at the Meredith Town Docks, Meredith, NH, along with Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries Division, and representatives from the Law Enforcement Division, as well.

She further reported that the Moultonborough Library has asked her to hold another Search & Rescue (SAR) Program for summer/fall residents and that she would be scheduling that in the near future.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that he has heard from constituents that they are saddened to learn that the Department is doing away with seals when registering animals due to the online registration process. As a reminder, successful hunters can still register a deer in person, as the online registration process is not mandatory.

Commissioner E. Stohl reported that he recently attended the CT Lakes Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting and the topic of ATV activity on the tract of land the department owns a large portion of was the hot topic. He reported that he sits on the recreational committee and at the upcoming meeting the committee plans to aggressively attack the ATV issue, as the Great North Woods ATV club is seeking an additional 70 miles of ATV trails and felt they have difficulty managing the 11 miles of trails they currently have. He reported that he would keep the Commission updated on the subject.

He further reported that he would be attending a meeting of The Northern Borders in the near future. He inquired if Colonel Jordan would be attending, as well. Colonel Jordan responded that he was unable to attend, however, he would send Major Walsh in his stead.

Commissioner P. DeBow read the following letter aloud:

*“Last month during our discussion of a proposed change to the coyote hunting season, Commissioner Temple asked the Chair, “Did you see the public comments”? The reference was to the many suggestions we received during biennial season-setting asking the department to close coyote hunting during the summer months and ban hunting with hounds.*

*A complaint that we hear often is that the non-hunting public is not heard during this process and the department shows no sign of adjusting the seasons in response to the suggestions. I fully realize why the department does not make such changes, it is because the department is staffed by biologists that follow science and do not waver to urban myths. Urban myths washed and rinsed through social media and stated as fact.*

*Urban myths and claims of specific animal behavior that have developed during my lifetime, include bats control mosquitoes, opossums control ticks and coyotes control rodents.*

*My senior year at UNH in my capstone wildlife management course, Dr. Litviatis titled a lecture “Prudent Predator”. The take home message was that predators do not control prey. Prey, in fact control predators through population cycles. That lecture, and twenty-seven years in business as a wildlife control operator have assured me of these facts; when the spring, summer and fall weather is wet and damp, expect ticks and mosquitos. When weather is windy, dry, and arid, expect fewer ticks and mosquitos. When the forest produces an abundance of seeds and nuts, be ready for the rodents. When there has been two consecutive years of poor acorn, beechnut, maple, and ash seed production, mice will die off from lack of food. What doesn't affect their population are plug-in ultra-sonic gadgets or the red fox that occasionally hunts the backyard.*

*The comments we received were dominated by the suggestion that by over hunting coyotes, there would be an increase in human Lyme disease cases as the mice are going uncontrolled by coyotes removed by hunters. In addition, by over-hunting coyotes, hunters are triggering an innate breeding response that causes larger litters, which in turn makes the coyote population increase. So, which is it? Are the individuals providing comment asking for more, or less, Lyme disease?!*

*This is what I know to be true; coyotes out compete and outright kill red foxes. Red foxes are excellent mousers; coyotes are marginal mousers, who move on to consume whatever is next or easily available. Hence, they are a prudent predator in that they feed on a wide variety of animal and plant species. They are so abundant and the numbers of them killed during the summer months so inconsequential, I would prefer the department spend its limited resources studying other species.*

*I would like to thank department staff, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Timmins, et al, for staying the course during this public comment period of mistruths, urban myths and outright lies and sticking to solid science for managing and guarding our healthy wildlife populations here in NH.”*

At this time, Commissioner P. DeBow moved to hold the July, August & September Commission Meetings at Fish & Game HQ, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301, and Commissioner A.J. DeRosa seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner B. Temple asked if it was appropriate to rescind the request made at a prior meeting to obtain additional data on coyotes.

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated that she did not believe Commissioner P. DeBow's letter affects the request for additional data on coyotes in any way.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that at the Marine Advisory Committee meeting it was announced that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Addendum #27 regarding future lobster regulations. He further reported that due to a steady decline in juvenile recruitment, this addendum would become effective once the index of recruit abundance declines by 35% from the 3-year average between the years 2016-2018. The conditions of the addendum includes gradual increased gauge and escape vent sizes. The 35% trigger is a better outcome than the original consideration of a 17% decline.

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

Director Mason reported that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service would be providing a presentation at the June 20, 2023 Commission Meeting on the Bear Hill Conservancy Project in Grafton County. He further reported that the process of writing rules as land is acquired would also be discussed.

He asked that Commissioners get their questions regarding the project to him by June 1, 2023, and he will forward them to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service ahead of time so they can be prepared to answer questions.

#### **CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

Kristina Snyder, Chester, NH, spoke to Commissioner P. DeBow's letter and responded that she would not dispute the statement about coyotes having an impact on the red & gray fox. She reported that members of the public have been asking the department to look into the fox populations for a very long time, as years ago the Wildlife Division Chief reported that there was a sharp decline in fox populations. She stated, "I'm trying to get the point across that you are not listening to the public, you're not understanding the whole picture and I find it very frustrating the lens you view things through." In closing, she stated, "I contribute to conservation. We sit here quietly, we listen and we just want to be heard. We just ask you to listen and make changes."

Christa Rose, [NortheasternPumaProject.net](http://NortheasternPumaProject.net), introduced herself and wanted to bring some attention to a wildlife and ecology initiative developing in the Northeast and felt that it was relevant for New Hampshire given its percentage of forest cover, and forest-associated species that can range far.

She reported that she, personally, started something called the [Northeastern Puma Project](http://NortheasternPumaProject.net), which you can check out at [NortheasternPumaProject.net](http://NortheasternPumaProject.net), and also a Cougar Research

Collaborative that's generating peer-reviewed research on different aspects of cougar recovery in the eastern United States. That group has one paper out already and a few more in the pipeline.

She reported that there were two events this spring that further demonstrate the work being done on this front. The first was a session of talks on eastern puma recovery, with a few individuals representing different groups, at the Northeastern Natural History Conference in Burlington, VT during Earth Day weekend. The second event was a symposium on rewilding North American species at the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies conference in Hershey, PA, just two weeks ago.

She pointed out that high level and good quality work was being done exploring puma recovery east of current breeding populations. She stated, "In order for it to go forward, we need to engage entities like state wildlife agencies, so again, I just want to come and meet with you and bring this fresh collective energy to your attention. I welcome talking about it further with you."

She thanked the Commission for listening.

Joan O'Brien, Amherst, NH, spoke to Commissioner P. DeBow's letter and stated, "What I took away from that letter was that maybe coyotes are not as useful as we people who want them hunted less claim, and maybe there are more than we believe there are. For many of us who made comments about how coyotes are treated, it had more to do with treating them differently than other species, singling them out and not giving them the same reprieve to raise their young."

Dan Dockham, Gilmanton, NH, asked for clarification as to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services authority to manage endangered species on a refuge. He reported that his interpretation of the law was that all other species are managed by the state the refuge is in.

Director Mason responded and asked Dan to contact him directly and they could have further discussion.

Linda Dionne, Raymond, NH, thanked Commissioner M. Hodgson for not rescinding her request for additional coyote data. She further thanked Kristina Snyder for her comments.

At this time, 2:36 p.m., Commissioner E. Stohl moved to adjourn and Commissioner C. Hodgdon seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

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Ray Green, Chairman  
NH Fish & Game Commission