

2d.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$10.00 from The Merrimack Valley Bass Masters, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account, for use by the Inland Fisheries Division. This donation was made due to over payment on a fishing tournament. (D. Timmins)

2e.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$30.00 from Craig & Janice Warner, Conway, MA, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account. This donation was made due to overpayment on a Non-resident OHRV registration.

2f.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$25.00 from Thomas & Lynda Heath, Concord, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account.

2g.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$2.50 from Thomas Chamberlin, Concord, NH, for deposit into the Small Gifts & Donations Account. (S. Mason)

The vote was unanimous in the affirmative to approve the above consent agenda.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1.) Financial Statement – Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, was not in attendance, therefore, Chairman Stohl asked that any Commissioners with questions should refer to Kathy.

2.) Randy Curtis, Federal Aid Coordinator, came before the Commission and provided an overview of the National Hunting & Fishing Survey. (See attached presentation).

Randy briefed the Commission on the following data:

State-level estimates:

NH survey completed in coordination with the 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHWAR).

Information provided on hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers:

- Participation
- Expenditures

The National Survey has been conducted since 1955 and is one of the oldest continuing recreation surveys.

- Typically conducted every five years.
- An updated snapshot of fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching.

The National Survey is jointly managed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA).

- It is conducted through a Multi-state Conservation grant funded from the Wildlife Restoration Fund and the Sport Fish and Boating Trust fund.
- NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) was selected by AFWA to administer the 2022 Survey.

- The Survey collects information from U.S. residents on the number of anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers, how often they participate, and how much they spend on their activities in the United States.

Data was collected in two phases:

- Screening interviews - 42,340 households nationwide. One adult household member provided information for up to four adults age 16 and older and up to four children ages 6-15.
- Covered 2021 participation and expected 2022 activities.
- Detailed interview waves - 105,698 respondents completed surveys covering only his or her own 2022 activity and expenditures.
- Interviews were conducted with samples of likely anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers who were identified in the screening phase.
- Respondents in the second survey phase were limited to those who were at least 16 years old.
- Interviews were conducted via the web, telephone, and self-administered questionnaire.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NATIONAL FHWAR SURVEY

In 2022 for individuals' ages 16 and older:

- 39.9 million people fished
- 14.4 million hunted
- 148.3 million participated in at least one type of wildlife-watching activity.

Total expenditures for wildlife-related recreation in 2022:

- \$394.8 billion

HIGHLIGHTS OF NH 2022 FHWAR REPORT

Participation in NH

- 830,000 NH residents age 16 and older participated in wildlife associated recreational activities.
- 161,000 fished.
- 49,000 hunted.
- 824,000 watched wildlife.

Press Release-Martha Williams, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service:

“Time spent in nature is an important part of the human experience ... These numbers demonstrate how important our public lands and wild places are not just for the well-being of

people who enjoy them, but as an economic engine that provides thousands of jobs and sustains businesses, economies and communities throughout the nation.”

Randy answered a few question from the Commission, a few of them below:

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa inquired as to what the sample size of the survey was.

Randy responded that the survey size was 1,900+, just shy of 2,000 in NH.

Commissioner E. Stohl inquired as to how much it cost the Department to have the survey done.

Randy responded that the cost of the survey was \$100,000, with state funds covering \$25,000 and 75% of the cost covered under a federal grant.

Commissioner E. Stohl further inquired as to why we pay for the survey if we do not use it as a management tool.

Director Mason responded that the Department uses it as a tool to solicit funding for the agency, to Legislators and such to show the economic impact and the interest the public has in wildlife. He further stated that the survey is referred to in developing the Big Game Management Plan, and even the Hatchery Modernization Project.

See attached for full presentation.

On behalf of the Commission, Chairman E. Stohl thanked Randy for the informative presentation.

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 met the morning of the May 20, 2024 Commission Meeting. She reported that it was a relatively short meeting, as the legislative session was winding down, therefore, there were no positions taken on any rules or legislation.

She reported that Marty Mobley, Legal Coordinator, pointed out one item of concern, that being that Representative Spillane has expressed his intent to attach a floor amendment to SB-503, guide applications fingerprints bill, which will add language that would repeal the prohibition on brass knuckles, blackjacks, and slung shots. She reported that the committee did not anticipate the Senate to concur with this, however, it and could ultimately be addresses in a committee of conference.

She further reported that the Legislative Committee meeting next month could be very short, or even cancelled, if there is no agenda.

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

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

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the committee did not meet.

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 the committee met on April 12, 2024 and got through the rest of the focus areas, turning them into Strategic Plan action items. He reported that the Committee would be meeting again, prior to the next Commission Meeting to finalize things, and that he planned to have a document for the Commission to review.

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

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

Commissioner R. Green reported that the committee did not meet.

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 did not meet.

SEACOAST REPORT: Commissioner J. Titone.

Commissioner J. Titone reported that NOAA (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration) has proposed new rules for the recreational taking of Gulf of ME Cod and Gulf of ME Haddock. The proposed bag limit for Cod will remain at 1 fish per day and the minimum fish size will increase from 22 to 23 inches, while the Haddock bag limit will be increased from

10 to 15 fish per day, with the minimum size increased from 17 inches to 18 inches. He further reported that the Public Comment period ends June 3, 2024, as they want implement these changes sooner than later.

In addition, he thanked Nicola Whitley, Chief, Public Affairs Division, for forwarding the Commission an article regarding the effects of cold-water upwelling events happening off the coast of Australia. He stated that he found it interesting, as the same phenomenon is occurring in the Gulf of ME, as studies show that water temperatures are colder now than they have been over the last 10 years. In closing, he stated, “Good news for the resources!”

LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Price.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the next meeting would take place on May 30, 2024.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Hodgdon.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that there was no meeting.

SEARCH COMMITTEE: Commissioners: M. Hodgson, Chair: Commissioners: E. Stohl, R. Green, J. Caveney & C. Hodgdon.

Commissioner M. Hodgson was absent from the meeting, therefore, Chairman E. Stohl reported the below on her behalf:

- April 16, 2024 was the closing date for accepting applications for the Executive Director position.
- Search Committee met on April 26, 2024 and reviewed 48 applications, selecting 6 candidates to offer interviews.
- Search Committee met on May 7, 2024 and provided the 48 applications/resumes to all Commissioners for review. The 6 candidates selected by the Search Committee to offer interviews was unanimous by the full Commission.
- May 30, 2024 - 3 candidates will be interviewed in person.
- June 7, 2024 – 3 candidates will be interviewed, 2 interviewed virtually and 1 in person. He reported that the candidates virtually interviewing were from Washington State and Virginia.

OLD BUSINESS: Chairman S. Price reported that the lack of access to Big Dan Hole Pond continues to be an issue and expressed concerned that we should not be stocking fish if the public cannot access the waterbody.

Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries, spoke to the situation and assured the Commission that the Department is not stocking Big Dan Hole Pond due to public access issues.

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that he is involved in the creation of a federal bill to create a woodcock stamp, which is about to be introduced to congress. He reported that the bill is similar to the migratory bird stamp and will help create habitat on private lands, etc. In addition, he stated that he would like to see the Legislative Committee take a position on it. He stated, "I'm excited, it's a pretty bi-partisan bill".

Chairman E. Stohl reported that he would be selecting a Nomination Committee for the Commission's Slate of Officers and selected the following Commissioners to serve on it; Commissioner M. Hodgson, Chair, J. Caveney & J. Titone. He directed the committee to query the full Commission to determine who is interested in the positions of Chairman, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer, as this will be on the agenda for vote at the next Commission Meeting, results effective July 1, 2024.

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 J. Caveney reported that he received calls from upset constituents from Cheshire County who experienced parking issues on opening day of trout fishing due to a bass fishing tournament on Spofford Lake. He questioned why the Department would be stocking for opening day, when there is a bass tournament scheduled on that body of water with limited parking.

Dianne Timmins responded that she was not aware of the conflicting date when it was scheduled. She stated that it did raise a huge red flag and assured the Commission that necessary changes to tournament regulations were under consideration.

Commissioner P. McGonagle thanked staff for a great Discover Wild NH Day. He reported that it was well done, and realizes the hard work that goes into planning an event such as it.

He reported that he attended a recent aquaculture hearing at the Region 3 Office in Durham, NH, and thanked Cheri Patterson, Chief, Marine Division, for letting him sit in and observe. He stated that it was a very informative hearing.

He further reported that he attended a Hunter Education Course at the Belknap County Sportsmen's Association. He commended the Instructors and the Club, as the portion of the class he sat through was well done. He reported that he got to speak to a diverse group of students and commended the program.

In closing, he reported that he attended a large kids fishing derby at The Gunstock Ski Area, sponsored by the Laconia Rod & Gun Club, funded strictly by donations. He reported that there was approximately 200 kids in attendance and that it was great to see Fish & Game on site.

Commissioner S. Price reported that due to the Winni-Derby not going forward this year, which was one of the largest fundraisers for the Daniel Webster Council, they have come up with an alternative fundraiser. The fundraiser is a Sporting Clay Class, taking place at Green Mountain Conservation, in Effingham, NH. She further reported that she brought applications for her fellow Commissioners, and reported that as Carroll County Commissioner, she would be sponsoring lunch.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Director Mason reported that Discover Wild NH Day was another success, with approximately 6,600 people in attendance.

He reported that he attended the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Conference held in Hyannis, MA, and met with his counterparts to discuss topics of mutual interests and concern.

He reported that he met with staff of Senator Shaheen's office, toured the New Hampton Hatchery, and provided them with an overview of the Hatchery Modernization Project.

In addition, he reported that the Department has received an additional \$3.55 million dollars of GOFERR (Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery) funding for the Hatchery Modernization Project.

He further reported that he is currently working with the Department of Information Technology to try to obtain state email addresses for all Commissioners. He reported that it would cost approximately \$2,000 per year to offer those addresses, therefore, he is asking for any lapse funding to cover the costs. He reported that the costs of the email addresses would be included in the next biennial budget.

In closing, he reported that he would be taking a few day off at the end of the week.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

There were no public comments.

Chairman E. Stohl thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

At this time, 1:56 p.m., Commissioner R. Green moved to adjourn and Commissioner J. Caveney seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Eric Stohl, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission