

**Fish and Wildlife Board  
Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, May 22, 2019**

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held a meeting beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05620, in the Dewey Building.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Tim Biebel, Johanna Laggis, Wendy Butler, Brian Bailey, Michael Bancroft, Bryan McCarthy, David Fielding, Mike Kolsun, Bill Pickens, Jay Sweeny, and Cheryl Frank Sullivan.

**Department Staff in Attendance:** Louis Porter (Commissioner); Mark Scott (Wildlife Director); Catherine Gjessing (General Counsel); Col. Jason Batchelder (Director of Law Enforcement); Susan Warner (Outreach Director); Scott Darling (Big Game Project Leader); Nick Fortin (Deer Project Leader); and Will Duane (Executive Assistant).

**Members of the Public in Attendance:** Molly Cook, Roy Kilburn.

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The meeting to was called to order at 5:00 PM by the Chair

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**1) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Michael Bancroft moved to approve the previous meeting minutes as drafted. Bill Pickens seconded the motion

**Vote:** unanimous voice vote to approve the previous meetings minutes as drafted.

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**2) Public Comments (Limited to 2 minutes per speaker)**

None of the members of the public in attendance wished to address the Board.

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**3) 2019 Antlerless Deer Hunting Muzzleloader Permits, Archery Antlerless Deer Hunting, and Youth Deer Hunting Weekend—Final Procedural Vote**

Wildlife Director Mark Scott summarized the process thus far for the 2019 antlerless deer hunting permits for muzzleloader hunting, archery hunting, and youth hunting weekend. The Department held 7 public hearings where comments on this topic were received. Most of the comments received concerned the health of the state's deer herd. Big Game Project Leader Scott Darling summarized the comments received during the March meetings held on this topic. Over 650 people attended the meetings and provided comments on the Department's proposal. Many who attended the public hearings were concerned about the severity of the previous winter. Darling stated that the Department's proposal for 2019 was responsive to the observed winter severity. Other comments received focused on posted land in some sections of the state or the size and boundaries of the various Wildlife Management Units. The Department feels that this is a responsible way to manage the state's deer herd based on the available data.

Board Members and Department staff discussed carrying capacity, social carrying capacity, and deer per square mile before proceeding to a vote.

**Motion:** Wendy Butler moved to approve the Department's recommendations for the antlerless archery huntin, youth hunting weekend for either sex deer, and antlerless permits by WMU for muzzleloader season.

**Vote:** Unanimous roll call vote to approve the Department's recommendation for antlerless, youth, and muzzleloader permits.

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#### **4) Deer Petition Discussion**

The Board reviewed petition submissions relating deer regulations from the previous 5-10 years to determine what follow up actions, if any, might be required. The Board had previously decided that deer petitions requesting rulemaking would be tabled until the Board "opened up" the deer rules. The suggestions in the previously tabled petitions were considered and incorporated as public comments into the deer regulation proposal currently under consideration by the Board.

The Board voted unanimously to deny any outstanding petitions relating to changes in the deer rules that might have been tabled at the time of its submission. The Board and Department will follow up the petitioners individually.

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#### **5) Fish Petition Discussion**

The Board received a petition for rulemaking concerning the use of weighted lures and lines in sections of the Clyde river as related to the taking of landlocked

Atlantic Salmon. The Board voted unanimously to deny the petition and not initiate rulemaking on this subject.

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## **6) Commissioner's Update**

The final deer hearing is scheduled for June 4<sup>th</sup> at CVU High School in Hinesburg. This meeting will be on the proposed deer regulation package including crossbow additions to the big game species rules and technical corrections and clarifications to the bear rule.

The Department will be at the Statehouse for the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules on Thursday May 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the trapping furbearers for compensation rule changes. The question now is the use cable restraints through a Commissioner's permit in nuisance situations or wildlife research. The Legislative Council may tell the Department that it does not have the authority to issue any permits for the use of cable restraints.

July 27<sup>th</sup> Barre Fish and Game club's 100<sup>th</sup> year celebration. The club has been a big asset to the Department and the Board for hosting events, talks, and meetings. Brian Bailey noted that the club is hosting its annual Gunner Brook kids fishing derby on June 15<sup>th</sup>. It is the longest running, consecutive, annual, kids fishing derby in the U.S.

Legislative Game Dinner was a success, thanks to all who attended. It was great to have Board Members and Legislators in the same space. There was lots of good conversation over a wide variety of prepared wild game. It was valuable for the Legislators to meet Board Members in person. We will hold this event again next year when we display at the card room.

Personnel changes; Tom Rogers who worked in the Department's Outreach Division has left for a position at the Nature Conservancy. John Pellegrini has retired from the Hunter Ed program and will likely return as a seasonal employee.

This weekend is the Department's adult hunter ed program for turkey hunting. This is a Department pilot program for hunter ed and conservation education for adults who do not come from a hunting background. Attendees will finish their hunter ed certification and go on a mentored turkey hunt as part of the program.

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for June 19<sup>th</sup>. We will likely hold the meeting at a different venue in the Montpelier area to accommodate a potentially larger crowd.

There is still a vacancy on the Board for the Rutland member position. The

Department is working to resolve the vacancy.

The VPR podcast Rumblestrip produced an episode on the recent Orleans deer hearings. The episode very fairly portrayed the atmosphere and attendees at this event.

Legislative update: The Departments deer and moose language changes have progressed through the house and the senate. This will put the Department into a better position to act on the new deer regulations and allows more flexibility in years with lower recommended moose permit numbers.

19 of the 30 moose calves collared this winter have been killed by winter tick load and/or the intense winter. The winter severity index was higher than a usual year, but the tick counts do not seem to have increased from last year.

Approximately 70 bear cubs from Vermont and New Hampshire have been sent to the Kilham Bear Center in New Hampshire for rehabilitation due to abandonment or starvation. This is a record number of cubs placed with a rehabber. Bears likely dened earlier than usual last fall due to a lower food supply resulting in an earlier waking from hibernation.

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The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 PM

*The mission of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.*