

# **Fish and Wildlife Board Meeting Minutes**

## **Wednesday, September 20, 2023**

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held an in-person meeting at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at the Waterbury State Office Complex, Fox Conference Center, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671. A recording of the meeting is available on the department's YouTube channel.

### **Agenda**

1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (July 26, 2023)
2. Public Comments (Limited to 2-minutes per speaker)
3. Petition Regarding the Use of UAS (Thermal Drone) to Assist with the Locating of Injured Game
4. Vermont Black Bear Biology & Management
5. Commissioner's Update

**Board Members Present:** Michael Bancroft, Brian Bailey, Nicholas Burnham, Brad Ferland (Chair), Allison Frazier, Michael Kolsun, Neal Hogan, Paul Noel, Jay Sweeny, Martin Van Buren

**Virtual:** David Deen, Bryan McCarthy, Robert Patterson

**Absent:** Jamie Dragon

**Department Staff Present:** Commissioner Christopher Herrick, Counsel Catherine Gjessing, Game Warden Colonel Justin Stedman, Biometrician & Research Manager Katherina Gieder, Wildlife Management Program Manager David Sausville, Wildlife Biologist/Black Bear Project Leader Jaclyn Comeau, Public Information Officer Joshua Morse, Principal Assistant Abigail Connolly

**Virtual:** Information Specialist John Hall

**Members of the Public Present:** Justin Lindholm, Rod Coronado, Andy Phelan, Bob Galvin

**Virtual:** Jane Fitzwilliam, Anne Jameson, Claudia Mucklow, Katie Nolan, David Kelley, Molly Bezio

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm

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### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Justin Lindholm, Mendon, regarding the department's Learn to Hunt Class

Bob Galvin, Richmond, regarding the sale of black bear body parts and the length of the bear hound training season

Rod Coronado, Orange, regarding the sale of black bear body parts

[The recording of the public comments and the meeting can be viewed here.](#)

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## **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

Board Member Deen moved to approve the minutes from July 26, 2023. Board Member Bailey seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes (13-0).

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## **Petition Regarding the Use of UAS (Thermal Drone) to Assist with the Locating of Injured Game**

Josh Ainsworth presented his petition to allow the use of UAS (thermal drone) to assist with the locating of injured game in Vermont. The petition and the handout can be seen below. Josh Ainsworth discussed his suggestions on how to regulate the use of drones. The Board Members asked the petitioner questions regarding the detection of deer by thermal drones and what the current allowed use of drones is. Board Member Frazier moved to accept the petition for the department to review and return to the Board with a recommendation. Board Member McCarthy seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the motion (13-0).

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## **Vermont Black Bear Biology & Management**

David Sausville introduced Jaclyn Comeau. Jaclyn Comeau discussed that black bears are treated as an umbrella species in Vermont, thus the department has a detailed conservation plan for black bear. Jaclyn Comeau discussed in detail the four main components of the black bear project plan: habitat conservation and management, research, Vermont's bear population model, and human bear interactions. The Board Members asked Jaclyn Comeau questions regarding data collection, bear sizes, and what happens to cubs when their mother is killed.

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## **COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE**

Commissioner Herrick thanked Jaclyn Comeau for her work managing wildlife and its habitat. Commissioner Herrick explained that due to the flooding the normal meeting spaces for the Board Meetings are unavailable, and the department is looking to hold the next meeting in Randolph. The Furbearer Rule will be presented to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) on October 5, 2023. Commissioner Herrick announced that Rosalind Renfrew is the interim Wildlife Director and hunter education classes are in full swing. Due to emails received after the last Board Meeting, Commissioner Herrick called on everyone to demonstrate respect to each other and remain issue focused instead of attacking individuals.

The Board Members thanked Mark Scott, retired Director of the Wildlife Division for his work and service.

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**Motion To Adjourn:**

The Board moved and approved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:10 pm.

**From:** Josh Ainsworth [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 17, 2023 3:41:25 PM  
**To:** Ferland, Brad <[Brad.Ferland@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Brad.Ferland@partner.vermont.gov)>  
**Subject:** Wildlife Board Petition

Good afternoon Brad,

I would like to petition the F&W board to discuss the moving forward with legislative change to Title 10 App 20, specifically the use of a UAS (thermal drone) to assist with the locating of shot game in Vermont. As stated in previous emails and taking into consideration the concerns of Fish & Game/Law Enforcement, my proposal would only authorize FAA Part 107 sUAS commercial drone pilots to do this work. If attending a monthly meeting is possible to discuss my ideas, I would greatly appreciate that. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.



# 20 SEP 2023 – FISH AND WILDLIFE BOARD MEETING

## BASIC OVERVIEW OF RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL UAV OPERATIONS

### RECREATIONAL – Fun & Hobby Uses



- Free 1 time test, permanent unless revoked
- Drones weighing more than .55lbs (250g) must be registered with the FAA and have label attached to the aircraft
- Recreational & Commercial can be flown at night, must have anti-collision lights that can be seen at 3 statute miles
- 400' above ground level is the maximum authorized altitude in class G (unsecured airspace)
- LAANC (Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability) is required for restricted airspace

### COMMERCIAL – Anything Other Than Fun

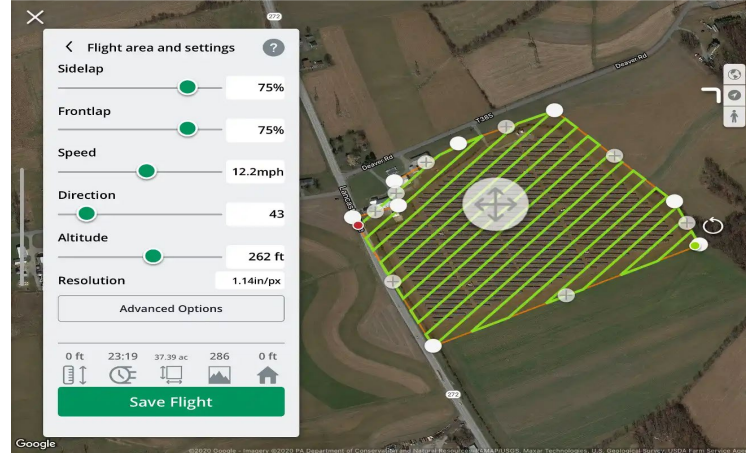


- Proctored exam, must be renewed every 24 calendar months

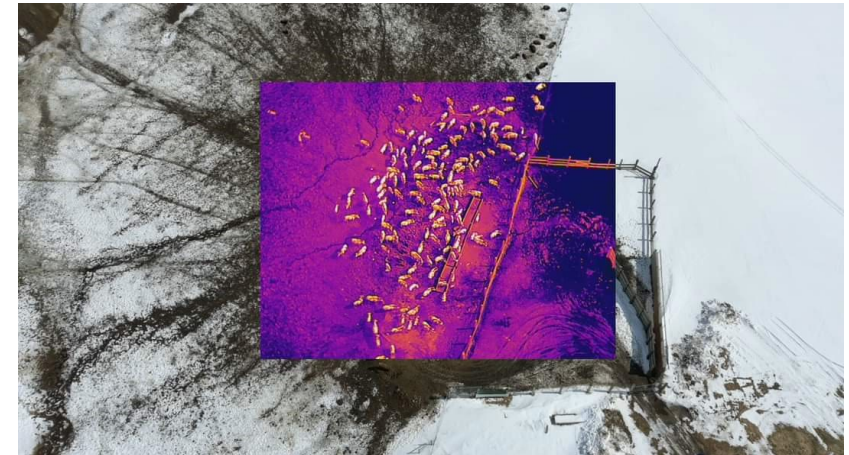


# 20 SEP 2023 – FISH AND WILDLIFE BOARD MEETING

## THERMAL EXAMPLES TAKEN OF BUFFALO AT NELSON FARM IN IRASBURG, VT



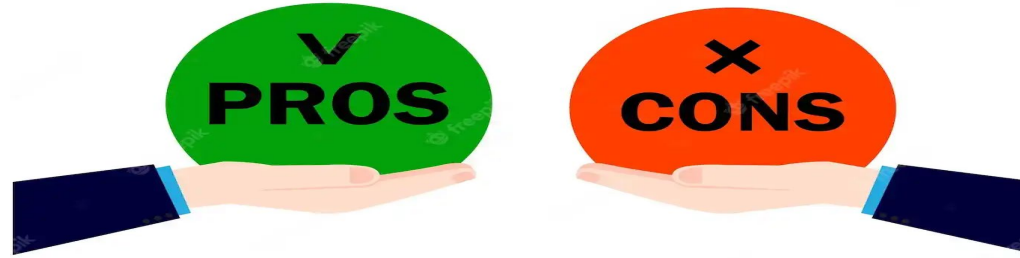
Autonomous grid patterns can be pre-programmed into app to ensure streamlined, time efficient flights.





# 20 SEP 2023 – FISH AND WILDLIFE BOARD MEETING

## PROS & CONS OF THERMAL DRONE RECOVERY



- SAFE
- QUIET
- TIME EFFICIENT
- FASTER GROUND COVERAGE THAN PEOPLE OR DOGS
- COORDINATED APPROACH DUE TO GPS ENABLED DEVICE
- ZOOM CAPABILITY TO CONFIRM ANIMAL
- REMOTE ID WILL BE A FAA REQUIREMENT ON MAR 16, 2024

- WEATHER DEPENDENT BASED ON UAS
- TIME IS A FACTOR DUE TO BODY TEMPERATURE

### CONCERNS

- How to regulate/verify drone and operator? Approved pilots must provide VT F&W a copy of their FAA Part 107 license, remain Remote ID (RID) compliant, and must be on the F&W licensed UAS list. Remote ID is essentially a drone license plate that helps the FAA, LE, and other federal agencies locate the control station when a drone appears to be flying in an unsafe or unauthorized manner.
- Require a dispatch number for the UAS operator to call before providing services, this puts responsibility on the pilot.