

Fish & Wildlife Board
APPROVED Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 21, 2007

The Fish & Wildlife Board convened a meeting at 5:00 p.m. on February 21, 2007, in the Skylight conference room in Waterbury, Vermont.

Attendees

Board Members: Rob Borowske, Chair; Brian Ames; R. Keith Armstrong; Wayne Barrows; Walt Driscoll; Albert Floyd; Ed Gallo; Dana Kittell; Craig Lefevre; Claude Rainville; John Roy; Jeremy Baker; Bob Shannon; and Bruce Therrien.

Department Employees: Commissioner Wayne Laroche, Colonel Robert Rooks, Ron Regan, Eric Palmer, Doug Blodgett, Tom Decker, Steve Hill, John Buck, Cedric Alexander, Jud Kratzer, David Yasharian, Michael Humling, Jane Lazorchak, Jens Hilke, and Cathy Merrill.

Borowske announced that this was his last Board meeting, as well as for Board members Floyd and Kittell, as all their terms had expired.

Approval of January 17, 2007 Minutes

Shannon made a motion to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Rainville.

Kittell asked that the following corrections be made to the minutes: Under **Wanton Waste**, it should read that “All voted in favor, except Gallo and Shannon (not Kittell), who opposed.” Also, Floyd asked that his name be added as opposing the motion. Kittell noted that under **Roundtable** where it states that “Kittell informed the Board that his store is now a drop-off point for split shot . . .” it should be Shannon, not Kittell.

All voted in favor of the minutes as corrected above.

Introductions – New Fisheries and Wildlife Division Employees

Eric Palmer, Director of Fisheries, introduced new Fisheries Division staff: Jud Kratzer, fish biologist, stationed in St. Johnsbury; David Yasharian, fish culture technician, located at Bald Hill; and Michael Humling, fish biologist, who works at the Roxbury fish hatchery.

Ron Regan, Director of Wildlife, introduced new Wildlife Division staff: Jane Lazorchak who works on the Landowner Incentive Program; and Jens Hilke who provides wildlife conservation services to regional planning commissions and non-government organizations.

Fish Health and Importation – Third Vote

Rainville made a motion to accept the proposed regulation, which was seconded by Baker. The rule passed unanimously.

2006 Moose Season Report

Cedric Alexander gave a presentation on the 2006 moose hunting season. He said the results of the Forward Looking Infrared camera moose survey, (FLIR), would be analyzed and compared to hunter surveys. Board members said they would like the opportunity to review that information before taking a second vote. Alexander assured the Board that this information would be available within the next thirty days.

The Department will be conducting a random phone survey regarding fish and wildlife issues through a private contractor beginning in the next few weeks. This information will help with drafting a new moose management plan.

2007 Moose Season Proposal

Alexander reviewed the Department's proposal for the 2007 moose hunting season.

There was concern expressed by some about the moose population and whether the Department should be more aggressive in issuing permits. Alexander countered by saying the Department was recommending an overall 20% increase in permits, including an increase in antlerless permits for 2007.

At that point, Governor Douglas joined the meeting to thank the Board members for their service, and made special note of the Board members who were leaving.

There was discussion concerning complaints about limited hunter access in E1, E2, D1, and D2. Jim Wood, representing Essex Timber Company, addressed those concerns later in the meeting.

Board members offered their suggestions on how to increase the moose harvest and success rate, and there was general discussion on promoting hunting in different areas.

Jim Wood, Essex Timber Company, spoke to the Board and addressed the concerns regarding access. Mr. Wood said his company provides limited access in an effort to protect their road system and to disperse hunting pressure. He recalled that limited access was granted this year to all who requested it, with one exception. Mr. Wood said Essex Timber analyzes the moose harvest numbers every year, and will share their data with the Department in an effort to get a better handle on the moose population. He also invited Board members to visit the area.

Lefevre suggested that text be added in the digest regarding respecting other people's property.

Baker made a motion to accept the 2007 moose proposal, which Gallo seconded.

Ames made a motion to eliminate section 10.8 of Regulation #999 (the Moose Rule), which exempts auction winners from the three-year waiting period required for submission of public lottery applications. Therrien seconded the motion.

There was discussion on the effect that amendment may have on auction participants and income to the Department.

The motion to amend was defeated, with four members voting in favor.

A vote was then taken on the 2007 moose season proposal, which passed with all members voting in favor, except Floyd, who opposed.

Notes of Importance

Regan announced the death of former Board member George Duke from Brattleboro, who was killed in a motor vehicle accident earlier this week.

Mr. Armstrong thanked the Board for its show of support on his mother's recent passing.

2006 Deer Harvest Report

John Buck reviewed the 2006 deer harvest. A more in-depth report will be discussed at the Board's April meeting. The five public meetings have been scheduled for mid-March and will be held in Rutland, Bellows Falls, East Montpelier, St. Albans, and Lyndon (some locations need to be confirmed).

Wild Turkey Management Presentation

Doug Blodgett gave a presentation on wild turkey management and outlined steps the Department will be taking to maintain the wild turkey population.

Driscoll asked if the Department would consider a turkey-only tag. Commissioner Laroche responded that changes to the (license) fees are only allowed every three years. As this is the Department's "fee" year, Driscoll's suggestion could not be considered for another three years.

Importation and Possession of Animals for Hunting – Second Vote

Borowske cautioned that it was likely a second vote would not be taken at this meeting, as Board members and the Department did not have time to review all the public input received to date. Borowske suggested that a one-day meeting be scheduled where this item would be the sole topic.

Steve Hill addressed the Board concerning the Board's authority and legislative intent and cited numerous statutes bolstering his interpretation of the law.

There was a lengthy discussion on the interpretation of the statutes.

Gallo suggested the Board form a sub-committee comprised of all interested parties to come up with a rule to deal with this issue.

Lefevre made a motion to have the Chair request the Attorney General provide an opinion on the Board's authority to prohibit the creation of new hunting preserves. Floyd seconded the motion.

Borowske said if an opinion is requested by the Attorney General, then the one-day meeting would be postponed.

Ms. L. Brooke Dingleline, an attorney representing the Nelsons, addressed the Board with her interpretation of the statutes.

The Board then voted on Lefevre's motion: 7 in favor; 5 opposed; with one abstaining (Roy).

As the motion passed, the Board will await the Attorney General's opinion before taking any further action on this issue.

Legislative Update

Hill gave the Board a legislative update.

Roundtable

The departing Board members addressed the Board.

Roy moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

The next Board meeting has been re-scheduled for Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in the Skylight conference room in Waterbury, Vermont.

Respectfully submitted.

/s/cpm

Catherine Pirie Merrill
Executive Assistant

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.