

Fish & Wildlife Board
APPROVED Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 20, 2007

The Fish & Wildlife Board convened a meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 20, 2007, in the Skylight conference room in Waterbury, Vermont.

Attendees

Board Members: Dana Kittell, Chair; Brian Ames; R. Keith Armstrong; Jeremy Baker; Wayne Barrows; Walt Driscoll; Ed Gallo; Cyndy Jones; Craig Lefevre; Michael Popowski; John Roy; Bob Shannon; and Bruce Therrien.

Absent: Claude Rainville.

Department Employees: Commissioner Wayne Laroche, Colonel Robert Rooks, Tom Decker, Steve Hill, Scott Darling, John Austin, John Hall, and Cathy Merrill.

Chair Kittell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. He reminded the Board of the special meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 27, to be held in the 4th floor conference room of the Pavilion Office Building in Montpelier. The single agenda item for that meeting is the second vote on the regulation dealing with the Importation and Possession of Animals for Hunting. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 3:00 p.m.

Approval of May 16, 2007 Minutes

Driscoll made a motion to accept the minutes as written, which Jones seconded. Therrien questioned wording attributed to him on page 2, however, it was the Board's recollection that Therrien did make the comment attributed to him. The Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes as written.

Visitors

Visitors at the meeting introduced themselves as: Joanne Bourbeau, from Jacksonville, Vermont, representing the Humane Society of the United States; and Roy Kilburn of Berlin, Vermont.

Welcome Back

The Board welcomed Jeremy Baker, who returned from an absence due to injuries sustained in a hunting accident.

Presentation of Award

Dennis Jensen, representing the New England Outdoor Writers Association, presented Commissioner Laroche with an award "in grateful appreciation for your dedication to the outdoors of Vermont and New England" and designated Commissioner Laroche as an honorary NEOWA member.

Overview: Planning Process for Deer, Moose, Bear, and Turkey Plans

Tom Decker introduced John Austin as the Acting Wildlife Division Director.

Austin gave an overview of the planning process used for the deer, moose, bear, and turkey ten-year management plans. Austin said the process began in 2006, and said the recently completed "Public Opinion Survey on Wildlife Species Management in Vermont" was a big step in that process. Board members received a CD of the survey (the entire document is 381 pages). The survey was completed by Responsive Management on behalf of the Department. Mark Duda, Executive Director of Responsive Management, is tentatively scheduled to attend the Board's July meeting.

All the plans, (except turkey, which expires in 2008), are to be completed by December 2007, and the Department will encourage public involvement by holding open houses and having a web-based venue for comments.

Driscoll asked if the Department was working on the development or revision of any cold water fish management plans. Decker said he would check and let Driscoll know.

Kittell requested that the Department have a staff person present at the Board's July meeting prepared to answer questions concerning the survey. Austin assured Kittell there would be.

Presentation: Three Deer Proposal – how increased harvest will affect Department's original proposal

Commissioner Laroche said there would be no formal presentation at this meeting concerning the Department's three-deer proposal, however, he distributed a sheet showing deer harvest comparisons, and a lengthy discussion followed. Commissioner Laroche said the Department intends to move forward with the three-deer proposal as a stand-alone proposal, but does not expect the Board to take any action until December 2007 or January 2008. This deferral will allow the proposal to go through the public process, and Commissioner Laroche suggested hearings on the proposal could be held in conjunction with the five annual deer meetings.

Kittell was disappointed the Department did not provide more information on the three-deer limit, and asked the Department to issue a press release citing the reasons for the delay. Commissioner Laroche said a press release would be issued.

There was discussion on the public opinion relating to harvest limits and the projected loss of revenue due to the two-deer harvest limit.

Commissioner Laroche assured the Board that the Department would provide a range of information when it formally presents the proposal. He asked Board members to send him via email any ideas or questions, and they will be addressed in the proposal.

Steve Hill reiterated the Board's authority to look at this issue and, if the Board desires, to address this issue annually.

Commissioner Laroche reminded the Board that its authority over the management of the deer herd ends on June 30, 2009. The Department will advocate for the continuation of the Board's authority during the upcoming legislative session.

Lefevre suggested displaying on an easel the goals of any proposal prior to discussion.

First Vote: Importation and Possession of Wildlife (not for hunting)

Scott Darling, Wildlife Biologist for the Department, gave a PowerPoint presentation to start the discussion on the proposed amendments to Regulation #881, which addresses the importation and possession of wildlife. Col. Rooks told the Board that this regulation is not new; it has been in effect for 35 years, but the list needs refinement. Darling has been working on this proposed list for the last five years.

There was a question on the use of the wording “not for hunting” when describing this regulation, as there are animals on the list that are hunted. The wording “not for hunting” was used only to differentiate between the regulations: Importation and Possession of Wildlife for Hunting (§4714) and Importation and Possession of Wildlife (§4709).

It was agreed by the Board and the Department that in order to avoid confusion, the Department would not post the listings on its website.

Gallo suggested language to convey that if an animal was not on any list that it be considered prohibited until the Department makes a determination.

Shannon made a motion to accept the proposal, which was seconded by Gallo. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

It was the consensus of the Board that it would not be necessary to hold a public hearing.

Third Vote: 2007 Moose Season Proposal

Steve Hill informed the Board that the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) approved the proposed 2007 moose season regulation (today), and the rule was ready for a third vote.

Lefevre made a motion to approve the proposal, which was seconded by Ames. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Member Roundtable

Armstrong questioned why the Department was protecting predators.

Baker thanked the Board for its support during his recent absence. He said after working at a LCI Derby weigh station over the weekend, he was astounded at the amount of fish with lamprey hits and the lack of walleye being checked in.

Barrows was concerned with the “hypothetical” population growth estimates that he received from a Department biologist.

Gallo gave his field observations of a property adjoining Steam Mill Brook WMA, which included an increase in deer population and a phenomenal increase in black bear sightings. He asked if the Department had considered extending the bear season. Commissioner Laroche said the Department is looking into methods to better manage the black bear population, as there has been a drastic increase in nuisance bear and bear damage complaints.

Lefevre is looking forward to the deer winter habitat survey – who will do what/when.

Therrien was impressed with his 14-year-old's recent job shadowing with Tim Appleton, and is excited about the logging being done in the Steam Mill Brook area.

Kittell gave a brief overview on how he will conduct the meeting on June 27. Hill emphasized that the public comment period is over, and that the meeting should be considered a public meeting, not a public hearing.

Lefevre made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

/s/cpm

Catherine Pirie Merrill
Executive Staff 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.