

**Fish & Wildlife Board**  
**\*\*APPROVED\*\* Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, July 18, 2007**

The Fish & Wildlife Board convened a meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 18, 2007, in the Pavilion Office Building in Montpelier, Vermont.

Attendees

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

Absent: Dana Kittell.

Department Employees: Commissioner Wayne Laroche, Colonel Robert Rooks, Major Dave LeCours, Steve Hill, John Austin, John Buck, Bill Crenshaw, and Cathy Merrill.

Vice Chair Therrien called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., as Chair Kittell was unable to attend.

**Approval of June 20 and June 27, 2007 Minutes**

June 20, 2007 Minutes – Driscoll made a motion to accept the minutes, which Jones seconded. The Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes as written.

June 27, 2007 Minutes – Rainville made a motion to accept the minutes, which Gallo seconded. The Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes as written.

**Update – Importation and Possession of Animals for Hunting**

Shannon asked for an update on the proposed rule regarding the Importation and Possession of Animals for Hunting. Hill responded that the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) will consider the rule at its August 22 meeting. As the rule must be adopted within an eight-month period, and the deadline to adopt this rule is September 12, LCAR will address the issue of a time extension at its August 22 meeting.

**Visitors**

Roy Kilburn, Berlin, Vermont.

**Petition to Review Baiting Regulation**

Hill informed the Board that Roy Kilburn filed a petition requesting the Board review its regulation concerning baiting. Hill said the Department will review the request and make a recommendation to the Board for consideration at its next meeting (scheduled for August 15).

### **Presentation: Responsive Management's Vermont Species Management/Funding Survey**

John Buck introduced Mark Duda, Executive Director of Responsive Management (RM), whose organization recently completed a survey on Vermont's species management/funding.

Duda had available publications for the Board's review, gave an overview of the results of the survey, and entertained questions from the Board. He offered to run various scenarios of the results which could be presented to the Board at its next meeting. RM conducted a similar survey 11 years ago. The national survey, conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, is conducted every five years; their latest survey will be available in a few months.

Duda explained the role of the Department in developing questions and how RM crafts unbiased, neutral questions to obtain the information the Department is looking for. The survey results are available on-line. Duda said if respondents try to jade the answers, those answers would be "washed out" due to the large number of respondents. Duda said survey numbers are fluid, that biology trumps numbers, and opinions will change.

### **Vote: Youth Waterfowl Season and Resident Goose Season**

Bill Crenshaw presented the Department's recommendations for the youth waterfowl season and the resident goose season. He explained the seasons are set using parameters set by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The recommendations were similar to last year, with the following two exceptions:

1. The Canada Goose bag limit restriction for Addison County was reduced to include only the Lake Champlain Zone from Route 125 north. (Last year it applied to all of Addison County in both the Lake Champlain and Interior Vermont zones.)
2. The weekend recommended for the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days was pushed forward to September 29-30. It was felt this weekend offered better hunting opportunities than September 22-23.

The public meetings on these regulations will be held on August 7 in Whitehall, New York, and August 8 at UVM in Burlington, Vermont. Both meetings will run from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Crenshaw advised it is advantageous to have a few Board members present at the meetings. After the public meetings, the Board will set the seasons at its August 15 meeting.

Rainville said he was going to suggest extending the Addison County boundary to the Charlotte Ferry Road to clearly define the zone, however, after reviewing the current proposal he was satisfied with the Department's recommendation.

Hill said the Board's vote at its August meeting would be a consolidation of today's vote and the August meeting vote, and the regulation would become effective once it is filed (Labor Day weekend).

Baker made a motion to accept the Department's recommendation, which Roy seconded. The Board voted unanimously to accept the proposal as written.

Baker commended the Department for coming up with different geographic boundaries and suggested the Deer Team follow Crenshaw's lead. Laroche said the geographic boundaries for hunting big game animals would not be reconsidered annually, but would be reviewed in the development of the ten-year plans. Hill reminded the Board that Wildlife Management Units could not be changed without legislative approval.

Roy asked if any study had been done on ice in the Champlain Valley. Crenshaw responded that it appears that ice-up is getting later and later, making it more challenging to plan the waterfowl hunting seasons. The Department's recommendation is a compromise package for late season and early season hunters.

Therrien encouraged Board members to attend one of the meetings to witness the compassion of water fowl hunters. Baker and Armstrong offered to attend the New York meeting.

### **Second Vote: 2007 Antlerless Deer Season and Youth Weekend Hunting Proposals**

John Buck reviewed the 2007 antlerless deer season and the youth weekend hunting proposals (draft 1.4, 070718). Steve Hill said he did not receive any public comments on this proposal.

It was noted that M1 (in Section 4.2) should be deleted from the listing of closed WMUs, as M1 is open to either-sex archery hunting.

Ames made a motion to accept the proposal as corrected above, which was seconded by Baker.

Barrows raised concerns he had about the lack of information being provided by the Department. He said information he received earlier from the Department contradicted the Department's proposal. He said by looking at the Department's numbers, it appears that last year's antlerless harvest decreased the population by a significant number; however, the Department is now asking for an increase in antlerless permits from last year. He said the Board had not been given any plans as to where the Department wants to go with the deer herd.

Barrows then made a motion to change the proposed number of antlerless permits issued in 2007 to the same amount of antlerless permits issued in 2006; with no change to the open archery zones. Shannon seconded the motion.

John Buck said the Department is prescribing a conservative slowing of the deer population. He said the Department needs to be on guard and not allow the population to get out of control due to underharvesting, mild winters, and consecutive seasons of deer herd growth. The proposed small increase in antlerless permits in 2007, (2000 overall), would result in approximately 400 animals being harvested, based on a normal success rate. These 2000 permits would be issued for targeted WMUs where deer populations appear to be too high.

Barrows questioned the methodology used for opening/closing zones, and would like that information.

There was discussion about the Department being conservative in WMU D2, and if the Department determines impacts on the habitat based on anecdotal information.

Barrows questioned the numbers of the actual harvest, and noted that only three zones met the expected harvest target; either there are no deer in those areas, or no hunters. Commissioner Laroche said there may be many reasons for not hitting the target.

Barrows said he would expect the Department to define everything it is looking for in next year's proposal, and should anticipate questions if the figures don't add up.

Baker asked Buck if WMU L would ever be opened for antlerless harvest. It was Buck's personal opinion that the population would never over-populate due to the terrain and habitat limitations.

There was discussion about the possibility of managing the herd differently by changing zone boundaries; e.g. using town/county boundaries. Buck said adjustments are in order for some WMUs, and they could be redefined due to similarity of geography. There was discussion about deer yard surveys, and their limitations for predicting deer numbers. Buck said the physiology of the deer is being monitored, and that indicates to the biologists the carrying capacity of the land. He also said there is more to managing the herd than surveying deer yards; that four season management is important for the sustainability of the herd.

A vote was taken on Barrows' motion. All were opposed, except Barrows.

A vote was then taken on the proposal amended as recommended by Hill (delete M1 from Section 4.2). All voted in favor, except Barrows who opposed.

Hill said he would provide the Board with a clean copy of the approved final draft. He said if LCAR heard the rule at its August 8 meeting, the regulation would be ready for a third vote at the Board's August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Roundtable**

Armstrong asked how much income the Department receives from non-game sources. Armstrong said he believed too much emphasis is placed on promoting predators, specifically blue herons, for the amount of revenue received.

Shannon raised the subject of the discovery of the algae *Didymo* in the Connecticut River. Commissioner Laroche updated the Board on the situation, and said the Agency would be educating the public on precautions that should be taken to prevent its spread.

Baker applauded the Department on the turkey brood survey that was recently placed on the Department's website. Baker also alerted the Commissioner that the Kent Pond access has filled in with silt due to the recent heavy rains. The Commissioner will forward this information to Eric Palmer.

Driscoll recommended the Department conduct a survey on fishing issues similar to that undertaken by Responsive Management. He also questioned why the Bald Hill fish hatchery building was not in use. Commissioner Laroche responded that projects are completed as funding is available, and in the case of Bald Hill, a floor needs to be installed at the filtration building.

Barrows complimented the Department on the recent moose lottery; as a result he will be guiding his granddaughter on a moose hunt this year.

Rainville asked what the Department's position is on proposed cell towers and their effects on deer wintering areas. John Austin responded that the Department has input on cell tower projects at various levels; e.g. Act 250 or Public Service Board review. The Department has dealt with 50+ cell tower projects throughout Vermont, and they are treated the same as any other regulated development project that could impact the deer yards.

Gallo spoke of increasing license sales and enhancing the deer herd. He cited deer feeding practices used in Ontario to sell "the product." He said the Department should be open-minded and objective and review practices used in different states and provinces; that methods learned 20-30 years ago are not necessarily the answer for 2007, and there were other tools that need to be looked at. Commissioner Laroche said that Vermont's habitat limits the quantity and quality of our "product" and cautioned that artificial feeding promotes disease.

Therrien wondered about the possibility of more "catch and release" trout fishing opportunities on Vermont's rivers. Commissioner Laroche said it is challenging to provide fishing opportunities to a full suite of the public and minimize conflicts.

Therrien mentioned the need for Board members to be trained, and asked the Department to schedule training. Commissioner Laroche said he agreed, and it was just a matter of scheduling the training.

Roy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which Lefevre seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 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.***