
From: --James Ehlers-- [mailto:james@elkpublishing.com]
Sent: Monday, October 09, 2006 2:51 PM
To: Decker, Tom
Cc: 'Jim Shallow'; Aronowitz, Jason; Steve Adams
Subject: F&W Funding Task Force

Tom,

In preparation for our meeting next week, could you compile the following?

- Programs within the department with current or projected budget shortfalls
- Programs historically in the red since their inception
- Programs funded adequately, currently, but could achieve significant goals, both tangibly and politically, if had more funding
- Vacant positions that should be filled, associated costs over a 10-year period, and a priority ranking. Note positions which could sustain themselves through revenue generation--grantwriting or otherwise
- Significant sources for revenue generation in the opinion of the department, regardless of the source
- Of the above which could managed as dedicated funds
- Wish list: 10-year general fund appropriation for specific one-time projects

Thank you.

Sincerely,
James

From: --James Ehlers-- [james@elkpublishing.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2006 1:29 PM
Cc: jshallow@audubon.org
Subject: F&W Funding Task Force

Hello Friends of Vermont Fish and Wildlife,
My name is James Ehlers. I was recently appointed to the legislatively mandated Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force. Subsequently, I was elected chair of the committee. My co-chair is Jim Shallow.

I am writing to extend to you the opportunity to offer your perspective on VT Fish and Wildlife Department funding. Over the next several weeks, our committee will be identifying department budget area shortfalls and potential revenue sources to cover these as well as fully funded budget areas that the public desires to expand. We invite you to submit suggestions for funding current department activity. We also encourage you to identify areas where you or organization would like to see increased department action and associated results, along with your ideas for potential revenue sources to sustain these activities and accomplish tangible objectives. Including the pros and cons associated with your recommendations would be most helpful.

For your background, the Appropriations Bill of the last session contains our charge. It is as follows:

Sec. 296a. FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT; FUNDING TASK FORCE

(a) The governor shall appoint a fish and wildlife funding task force of up to nine members to develop recommendations for comprehensive, sustainable funding mechanisms for the operations of the department of fish and wildlife which complement existing funding sources. The task force shall, among other things, consider whether costs of work carried out by fish and wildlife department personnel in providing technical services to permitting bodies and in enforcing laws and regulations other than fish and wildlife laws and regulations, should be paid for from other agency and department funds, as appropriate.

(b) The office of finance and management shall provide staff services to the committee. Members may receive a per diem and expenses pursuant to section 1010 of Title 32. On or before January 15, 2007, the committee shall report its recommendations to the governor and the following legislative committees: the senate committees on finance, on appropriations, and on natural resources and energy; and the house committees on ways and means, on appropriations, and on fish, wildlife and water resources.

As you can see from above, our recommendations will be reported to the governor and several legislative committees.

Please send your suggestions to james@elkpublishing.com and jshallow@audubon.org.
Attaching them as Word documents would be most appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration, interest and support. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
James Ehlers

From: --James Ehlers-- [james@elkpublishing.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2006 2:18 PM
To: 'Leo Laferriere'
Cc: jshallow@audubon.org; 'Bill Samal'; Decker, Tom; Aronowitz, Jason
Subject: RE: F&W Funding Task Force

Dear Leo,

We request that information from the Department. Our committee does not have the means to fulfill individual public information requests of which I am aware. I am copying Tom Decker, the Operations Director at Vermont Fish and Wildlife, so that you may make arrangements with him.

Thank you, Leo.

Sincerely,
James Ehlers

From: Leo Laferriere [mailto:leol@gmavt.net]
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2006 2:10 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Cc: jshallow@audubon.org; Bill Samal
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

James & Jim: It would be helpful to have a list of current funding sources and their percent of the F&W budget. Leo Laferriere

----- Original Message -----

From: --James Ehlers--
Cc: jshallow@audubon.org
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2006 1:21 PM
Subject: F&W Funding Task Force

Hello Friends of Vermont Fish and Wildlife,
My name is James Ehlers. I was recently appointed to the legislatively mandated Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force. Subsequently, I was elected chair of the committee. My co-chair is Jim Shallow.

I am writing to extend to you the opportunity to offer your perspective on VT Fish and Wildlife Department funding. Over the next several weeks, our committee will be identifying department budget area shortfalls and potential revenue sources to cover these as well as fully funded budget areas that the public desires to expand. We invite you to submit suggestions for funding current department activity. We also encourage you to identify areas where you or organization would like to see increased department action and associated results, along with your ideas for potential revenue sources to sustain these activities and accomplish tangible objectives. Including the pros and cons associated with your recommendations would be most helpful.

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Please send your suggestions to james@elkpublishing.com and jshallow@audubon.org. Attaching them as Word documents would be most appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration, interest and support. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
James Ehlers

To: Fish and Wildlife Funding Committee

From: James S. Andrews
Research Herpetologist
Sunderland 114
Middlebury College
Middlebury, Vermont 05753
jandrews@middlebury.edu

Date: October 11, 2006

James, Jim, & Committee Members

Clearly, as the responsibilities of Vermont Fish and Wildlife have increased over the last thirty years, our funding of them has not kept pace. As someone who is not only a hunter and a fisherman but also a biologist and conservationist I hold a hunting and fishing license and am happy to have a significant portion of that income used to fund some of the newer responsibilities of the department (Nongame, RT&E species, recovery plans, Act 250 review, etc.). Although, I realize there are some in the sportsman's community that feel differently, most of my hunting and fishing buddies have no problem with this either. However, it is not enough. We do need to find additional sources of income, for personnel, for educational programs, for contracted services, for habitat protection, for surveys, and for enforcement.

My highest priorities would be funding for those species most in need, those most threatened. So, consequently, this would be endangered, threatened, rare, and nongame (including plant communities). For many of these species groups and community types, we need people to gather basic baseline data on distribution and abundance. Types of needs would be as listed above: personnel, habitat protection, educational programs, contracted services, surveys, and enforcement. We are way behind on writing recovery plans, need people to either write the plans or oversee the contracts, people to identify and manage the needed habitat, people to write and distribute educational materials, specialists in taxonomic groups currently underserved by Fish and Wildlife (invertebrates, other nongame), PR people, nongame (wildlife) wardens, and the funds to support these people.

In addition, we need to be keeping common species common, so working with communities and private landowners to provide support and information for their wildlife management efforts is important.

Consequently, I think a substantial increase in funding is required. Thankfully, polls show that Vermonters whether they are sportsman, conservationists, or others that appreciate a rural lifestyle, consider abundant and diverse wildlife important to their quality of life here in Vermont.

So, we need to spread the funding net to include essentially everyone, since we all benefit either directly or indirectly from wildlife (and the broader ecological services) and the healthy working ecosystems necessary to support them.

I agree that developers should be paying impact fees that would support the review of their projects. I also think the gasoline tax (and/or rooms and meals) should be used as a way of capturing tourist dollars and defraying the impact of roads and carbon dioxide (climate change) on wildlife. I have absolutely no problem using some/more of my income tax dollars for funding Fish and Wildlife. Since loss and degradation of habitat (not properly managed hunting, fishing, or trapping) is the major threat to sustained wildlife populations, those activities that consume habitat should be considered as major new sources of funding through development taxes, capital gains on land, etc. Perhaps it could be directly tied to the amount of land developed.

Thanks for the opportunity to give input and good luck. Fish and Wildlife needs the help.

From: Lisa Murdock
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2006 7:04 AM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

Heres a thought that might cause an up roar but place a users fee for all canoes and kayaks on all VT waters. Of course it could say all types of watercraft (motorized or not).If it floats it should have a registration. Many folks use F&W boat launches for placing the non motorized crafts in the water . Good luck with finding much needed funding!

Thanks M Murdock

Just one more thought ,check the enforcement for wardens doing vessle saftey checks and tickets issued. Compare those to VSP marine patrols and seek MORE funding from the Dept of Public Safety for the marine enforcement. Good Luck

From: L. Samuel Miller [mailto:sammiller1@hughes.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2006 10:58 AM
To: jshallow@audubon.org
Cc: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: James Ehlers' Request

Hi Jim:

I missed the end of James' e-mail so am sending you a copy with an addition in blue.

Funding F&W is a hard nut to crack. I favor ALL users of our streams and lakes to contribute the same way hunters and fishermen do. Perhaps not with a personal license but certainly with a license for all water craft. Camping trailers are another item to consider. Guides and charter boats should probably be licensed in a way that would both protect the public and in an amount that could be easily passed on to their clients. Perhaps the sales tax collected on water craft and camping trailers could be earmarked for F&W?

In general, we all have to recognize that the resources and services provided by F&W are not free and should be paid for by the users. In particular, of course, others agencies, both public and private, should reimburse F&W for any services provided.

Sam

L. Samuel Miller
129 Miller Lane
Waterbury Center, VT 05677
802.244.1484

From: Stuart Deliduka [mailto:StuartD@sbelectronics.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2006 1:28 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com; jshallow@audubon.org
Subject: RE: F&W Funding Task Force

James & Jim

Congratulations on your appointments!!!

Here is a thought for you which maybe alot broader than you are looking for.

How would one increase VT Hunting License revenue? Increase the number of licenses sold or increase the cost for a licenses. Lets focus on increasing the number so licenses sold, which would mean more hunters and more secondary \$ in the Vermont economy, via gas tax, rooms & meals, sales tax etc. One of the best ways to increase the numbers of hunters would be to increase the availability of hunting opportunities.

I purpose the following suggestion:

Tax credit for land owners (25 acres or more as an example) who allow at least two non related people to hunt on their land for a year. I envision something like the renters rebate (land lord signs off for the renter), except, the two non related people would have to supply FULL Contact Information and their VT HUNTING LICENSE NUMBER! Hunters would be limited in the number of PROPERTY OWNERS Tax Rebate forms they can sign up for, say 2 or 3. Hunters can be instate or out of state. These Tax/Permission Land Use forms need to be completed annually in the first half of the year, thus driving hunter license sales up earlier in the year. Hunters would be SOUGHT AFTER BY LAND OWNERS, instead of the other way around. Nice to be wanted. Hunters would overtime be more selective in the land owners they are helping, this should cause habit improvement by competition for the needed hunters. Habit improvement helps alot of the non game species.

An economist could figure the tax credit amount vs the secondary income more hunters would provide so the NET could be truly balanced, or even in favor for the State of VT.

Pro's

- existing hunting license system
- a lot of these smaller land plots which are not being hunted will be which have lots of other secondary benefits
- Land owners receive tax relief.
- Land owners seek out hunters instead of the other way around.
- Duck Stamp revenue could be up slightly do to Interior puddles on ponds now being hunted
- Higher hunting license sales in the first have the the calendar year, Present/Future value of money.
- Increase opportunities for all forms of hunting and the land owner still has control of who, when and where.

Con

- One more thing for the land owner to do

Give me a call is you want to discuss this in more detail. I communicate better verbally.

Stuart Deliduka
Sales Manager SBE Division
SBE Inc
131 South Main Street
Barre, VT 05641
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StuartD@SBElectronics.com
www.SBElectronics.com

From: Bill Mayo
Sent: Friday, October 13, 2006 8:10 AM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

Hello Jim,

Good luck. It is my understanding that much of the funding needed to run the department comes from the sales of hunting licenses. The reduction from 3 deer to 2 deer has had a profound impact on the revenue generated. Let me explain.

I for one, prior to the changes made, purchased 2 Archery tags and a Muzzleloading tag every year. I did so because I limited myself to harvesting only 1 or 2 deer on my property and would often hunt my friends property in the next town. With the reduction to 2 deer, I now hunt my own land, no licenses required, and no longer purchase any tags.

Increasing license fee will have negative returns since it will drive more from the sport and cause more landowners to simply not buy any tags.

I would suggest that we have a habitat stamp on the back of our General Hunting license. The purchase for say 5.00 dollars would go to wildlife habitat programs. As an incentive the person would be eligible for a drawing for a moose tag, prizes, etc.

I also witnessed first hand how F&W department money is wasted on what I call unnecessary Overtime. My tenet was a Vt Warden. He often got called out in the night for nuisance raccoons. Each trip was booked as 4 hours OT. A person in Enosburg could have a Raccoon in his trash can and the cost of removal would cost around 100.00 dollars if you figured in all the cost. Often, the warden was involved in drug bust and all sorts of activities non related to F&W. The state should be paying back to the F&W department for non F&W activities.

Good luck Jim, you really have your work cut out for you.

Bill Mayo

From: Therrien, Bruce
Sent: Friday, October 13, 2006 10:36 AM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: RE: F&W Funding Task Force

James,

Congratulations on your appointment and good luck with the work that lies ahead. Let me say that my comments are made from the point of view of a concerned sportsman and citizen and are unrelated to my position as a F&W Board Member.

I think it is about time that this funding issue was looked at seriously and I am a little disappointed that you were given such a short period of time (Jan 17) to complete your task but obviously I understand the reasoning for the timeline. I can summarize my feelings pretty quickly and that is to say we need to start moving in a direction of a "user pay" system. Now before you have visions of buying a license to bird watch or requiring a ticket to launch a kayak, let me re-phrase it as a "beneficiary - contribute" system. I know this is not a new concept but it's implementation is long overdue. Please look outside the box at all the people that benefit from the work of the F&W Dept, both directly and indirectly, and evaluate how many of them are actually contributing to the system. Answer- not many. You will have to be creative in finding ways to get everyone to contribute without excessive administrative overhead, but I'm confident you can get it done.

2 other quick topics.

Land management- I have seen some positive steps here in the last 18 months, let's be sure a revenue stream (logging among others) is set up to continue funding habitat enhancement at least on the WMAs and other State lands.

License fees – I realize we need to stay "competitive" with the surrounding states but if we offer a quality "product" people should be willing to pay. The guys that whine about the \$29 cost of an annual license think nothing of spending \$8 on a dozen smelt every Saturday or banging out \$20 in Hevi Shot before the sun comes up. The sport is already expensive enough, I don't want to pay \$100 for a resident license either. My point is simply that if folks feel the Dept is spending the license fees wisely, then I think the possibility of raising license fees wouldn't be as taboo as it currently is. People get upset when they feel their license fees are being wasted studying turtles on the Missisquoi Bay causeway.

Good luck to you and thanks in advance for your efforts,

Bruce Therrien

From: Timothy Davis [mailto:thetimdavis@gmavt.net]
Sent: Saturday, October 14, 2006 10:36 AM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

Hey James,

Sorry it's taken me a while to get back to you on this.
I think it's great your working with these folks.

Issue:

How to raise revenue from the hunting and fishing public for wildlife management and natural resources management?

A few examples of our current course seems to be:

1. **Action** - Tap general fund for \$\$\$

Problem - everyone is now a player and hunters and fisherman no longer enjoy the privilege of paying for their own resources through license sales

2. **Action** - Use our 38 wardens to increase ticketing of violations to raise revenue

Problem - Good idea to keep everyone honest, but not a good way to generate \$\$\$
Ticketing your own income base can only provide a little supplemental money to help pay for the wardens time, not improve the resource.

3. **Action** - Assign a task force to tap the private sector for ideas on how to generate \$\$\$

Problem - None, so long as they come up with results and actually integrate a program that is then tested and reviewed for success.

Here is an idea courtesy of Alec Sparks that I thought was very creative and has some proven success.

Problem - Maintenance of F/W Access areas, monitor for abuse and vandalism, keep up roads remove garbage, make improvements etc...

Potential Solution - Create an "adopt an access" program, based on the adopt a highway program. Provide advertising for businesses and organizations that support the program and start a fund by creating parking stickers like the State Parks have.

Here is an idea courtesy of Tim Davis.

Problem - How can Fish and Wildlife leverage their role as "caretakers" for public lands and public access to generate revenue?

I believe the Fish and Wildlife department is a public entity.

I believe that the same can be said for corporations that offer publically traded shares of stock. Instead of purchasing shares in our State F/W program we pay taxes and buy licenses. This is proving to be an system insufficient to keep up with rising costs.

I don't know what Fish and Wildlife has set up as far as "ownership" goes for the access areas and WMA's.

I do know that it is this department that has a sign, advertising ownership on most access sites throughout the state that are used by many user groups.

Potential Solution - Sell "shares" in publically owned WMA's and access areas based on the same model as employee-owned companies. Access areas and WMA's are broken into geographic units, private landowners can role adjoining properties into the program and shareholder meetings are held to discuss costs, management, revenue, returns etc.....

This would break down the public's interaction into smaller, more manageable pieces, provides ownership to individuals and creates a market driven system to raise capital, while using the public sector as an administrative entity.

I hope that this helps.

If you would like to discuss this further please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tim

Tom,

Thank you for the presentation last night.

Could you please provide answers to the below when outlining the list of needs and the priority for those needs that we discussed last night?

Thank you, Tom.

Sincerely,

James

From: Walter Malmquist [mailto:wmalmquist@kingcon.com]
Sent: Monday, October 16, 2006 9:23 AM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

Delighted to see that you will be co-chairing the task force. It's a lot of important work.

I'm not certain what Fish and Wildlife has to do with the Vermont Use Appraisal Program, as VFP&R monitors and enrolls properties in the program, but I hope that Fish & Wildlife devotes some resources to supporting the program as current use properties provide crucial habitat and water quality to Vermont wildlife. Legislative support to maintain the program and supporting increased funds for VFP&R to monitor and enroll properties should be important activities to Fish & Wildlife to maintain Vermont habitat for wildlife. I believe that land gains sales tax revenues should be dedicated to this.

I am very concerned that as awareness of dangers potential posed by the possession of firearms, education efforts/events for gun safety programs seem to be declining. My concern comes from the fact that it is becoming more and more difficult to identify local educational programs. I wonder whether this stems from a lack of interest or greater liability associated with conducting such programs. This seems to be accelerating the decline of the population of Vermont hunters. It may be that education associated with firearm safety should become the responsibility of the State of Vermont rather than local clubs if we wish to continue the tradition in a responsible fashion. Local schools should conduct the gun safety programs with the assistance of local fire arms experts, such as police officers... good public relations for police departments as well as schools if done correctly.

I get the impression that Fish & Wildlife doesn't care too much for private landowners. I suggest that Fish & Wildlife collaborate with Vermont Woodlands Association and/or Coverts to assist in landowner education efforts. Better forestry will be practiced with more informed landowners. Better conservation will be practiced with better forestry.

Regards and thanks,
Walter Malmquist

From: VOGA [mailto:info@voga.org]
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2006 1:40 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

Suggestions for Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force

There are several options that might generate revenues for F & W.

Personal Actions:

Take a friend fishing/hunting.

Outside of my work with VOGA, VOW and Adventure guides of VT., the way that I contributed to sales of licenses was to take a friend fishing. More often than not, we had to stop and purchase a license for my friend. This could be a cost effective promotion for the Department.

Education:

Educate Tourism Employees and Representatives.

In addition to the Vermont Ambassador Program, VDTM employees, 800 operators and welcome center staff should be better informed and could use an annual refresher program.

Trade Shows:

Consistent Representation is Needed

Either send employees or possibly partner with VOGA members to ensure representation.

Fishing Tournaments:

Vermont needs to be more aggressive in attracting, supporting and promoting fishing tournaments.

New York is doing very well in attracting fishing tournaments while Vermont is not. Simple!

Vermont Outdoor Guide Association Links:

F & W has been very good about promoting our Association and our members. One area that could be improved upon is links from the department's web site.

Suggestions:

On the Department's web under "Wildlife Programs", a link called "Guide Services" to <http://www.voga.org/nature.htm>

On the Department's web under "Hunting & Trapping", a link called "Guide Services" to http://www.voga.org/fishing_hunting.htm

On the Department's web under "Fishing", a link called "Guide Services" to http://www.voga.org/fishing_hunting.htm

Options for Funding for Access:

Pressure for more access areas for non motorized vessels and for wildlife watching on State lands is increasing in Vermont and across the country. Without some form of funding, this will remain a problem. Here are some options:

1.) Register Canoes, Kayaks and other non motorized vessels:

This option is heavy on management and has been fought by several well organized groups, including the ACA (<http://www.acanet.org/stewardship/registration.lasso>) because registration discourages paddle sports. It is expensive for low income families with multiple vessels and for commercial operators.

Canoe/Kayak Registration in other states:

All in **Illinois** (<http://dnr.state.il.us/pubaffairs/2005/April/boat.htm>), (Funding for the state boat access grant program is provided through revenue generated by boat and canoe registration fees and marine motor fuel taxes paid by boaters.)

Ohio (<http://www.dnr.ohio.gov/watercraft/opsguide/ohiovr1.htm>), (Owners of vessels such as canoes, kayaks, racing shells and inflatable boats, can now obtain an optional tag when renewing their watercraft registration, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Watercraft. “We just began issuing the first of our new registration decals for owners of hand-powered watercraft who are seeking exemption from the traditional numbering system that’s been in use for many years,” said Jeff Hoedt, chief of the ODNR Division of Watercraft. “This comes in response to a lot of boater interest, which sought to have an option in registration and numbering displays that would be more pleasing, yet satisfy the need for being easily identified by watercraft officers.”

These new registration decals for hand-powered watercraft are only available through the Division of Watercraft administrative headquarters at Fountain Square in north Columbus. For more information, call toll-free 1-877-4BOATER (877-426-2837). The new decal costs \$20 and may be solely displayed on the upper right corner of the transom, on a portion of the rear deck, outside the boat below the port side gunnel and on the inside of the boat just below the starboard side gunnel.

Owners choosing to remain with the traditional Ohio-shaped registration sticker will continue to pay a \$15 fee to obtain two registration tags which must be displayed on the exterior forward hull of the boat along with the Ohio registration numbers.

Effective July 4, boats without a hull identification number are required to have one before owners can obtain their watercraft registration.)

Oklahoma, (If using your own canoe, state regulations require you to register your canoe with a tag agency, display registration and decal on canoe, carry copy of waterproof registration with you in canoe.)

Pennsylvania using state facilities

Registered with Exceptions:

Alaska: not > 10’

Arizona: not inflatable boats 12’ or less

Iowa: not inflatable boats >7’ and canoes/kayaks > 13’

Minn: not 9’ or less

Maine considered this option: <http://news.mainetoday.com/indepth/statebudget/050322boatfees.shtml>

Survey Results: http://news.mainetoday.com/indepth/statebudget/050322boatfees.shtml?show_results#poll

2.) Boat Launch/Access Permits:

This may be the best option as it is specific and the funds would go directly to the Department for access development. Those individuals who do not have fishing, hunting, trapping licenses or registered motorized vessels would need an access permit.

Michigan, (*Annual Boating Access Site/Launch permits cost \$24 and are required for entrance into marked fee sites. If a launch site is located within a state park or recreation area, a motor vehicle permit is required. Daily Boating Access Site/Launch permits cost \$6 and are required for entrance into marked fee sites. If a launch site is located within a state park or recreation area, a motor vehicle permit is required.*)

3.) Recreation License/Pass:

1. Implementation of a recreation license sold through the same process as fishing or hunting licenses, on the same form. Commercial guides, educators and their employees would need to get a license, as would thousands of people who canoe and kayak, etc but don't fish, hunt, trap or own motor boats.

Demand for use of access areas by the general public is growing while revenues to the department for maintenance and improvements are declining. With an estimated 150,000 residents of Vermont participating in paddle sports it is clear where the demand is coming from. A recreation license for those not already paying into the system would generate badly needed funds for the department.

2. Priorities for fishermen and motorboats etc. should remain in place and made obvious with signage at access areas.

Blocking access or parking, commercial use such as setting up a place of business, soliciting and others would remain illegal. By involving more of the public in this system, the Fish & Wildlife Department will have a direct line of communication to a larger group of invested recreationists.

Information on trends:

There are several versions of recreation/access fees on public lands. Here are a couple of examples:

Federal Lands –

“Most Americans recognize that they should pay a fee for some government services and facilities. Taxpayers support the State Department but also pay a \$60 fee to get a passport. Taxpayers pay for road construction, but many state governments charge tolls on turnpikes and bridges. Most people recognize that those who use these facilities and services should pay a nominal fee to support them. Americans expect the best from our parks, refuges, national forests and other public lands. Recreation fees help ensure we can provide the best facilities and services possible on our public lands.”

Gale Norton is secretary of the Interior.

Article Last Updated: 7/30/2005 10:56 PM

California National Forests:

Regional Recreation Passes are usually sold for a specific recreational area only, so make sure that you call the park, forest, or refuge you plan to visit ahead of time to see what recreation areas your regional pass covers.

Adventure Pass - What Is It?

The Adventure Pass (see <http://www.recreation.gov/regionalpasses.cfm>) is a recreation use pass within the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forests in southern California. Visitors must display the Adventure Pass in their vehicles when parked on the Forest for recreation purposes - picnicking, skiing, hiking, snow-play, hunting, fishing, etc. The Adventure Pass is not required for just traveling through the forests without stopping for information, or parking at places where a site-specific fee is already charged.

Hunting Access Enhancement Fee:

The Montana Legislature created this fee to help maintain and enhance hunting access to public and private lands statewide through programs like Block Management and other special hunting access projects. This is an annual fee and will be charged at the time the hunter purchases his/her **first** hunting license (including upland and migratory bird) of the season.

Recreational Use License:

Montana: License Requirements (<http://dnrc.mt.gov/trust/REMB/statues/recreationaluse.asp#relicense>) A **Recreational Use License**, which is available from any Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP) authorized license agent, is required by any person age 12 or older to use state land for general recreational purposes. **General recreation is defined as all non-commercial/non-concentrated recreational activities except trapping, cutting or gathering wood, collecting valuable rocks or minerals, mining, or collecting or disturbing historical, archaeological or paleontological sites or specimens.** These activities require a separate license or other authorization from DNRC. Commercial activities (such as outfitting), and/or concentrated recreational activities conducted by organizations or other groups require a Special Recreational Use License. These licenses are available only from DNRC offices.

Arizona: http://www.land.state.az.us/programs/natural/rec_offroad_permit.htm
You do not need an ASLD Recreational Permit if you are actually hunting or fishing on State land with a valid hunting or fishing license issued by the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Better use of Vermont Outdoor Professionals:

Vermont guide services and outdoor professionals spend thousands of dollars annually to attract visitors to our state. There are a few things that the Department could do to help this industry prosper.

1) Allow (non fishing, hunting & trapping) non motorized commercial vessels are not allowed to use our access areas.

Options:

- a) NO PERMIT REQUIRED for normal guiding activities.. It's time to bring Vermont up to speed with our neighboring states who do NOT require permits for guides who use their access areas. These other States however require a guiding license. Vermont's guiding industry is split on the licensing issue.
- b) Through the discretion of the Commissioner, permit group and commercial on access areas that are appropriate for these activities. For profits and non profits should be treated equally as organized groups and should all require permits. The commissioner could list no or limited commercial use areas.

2) Reduce the minimum insurance requirements for guided and group activities on State land.

State Insurance Requirements for Organizations: On National Forest Lands, there is a policy that requires coverage from \$300,000 to \$1,000,000 depending on the risk of the activity. On State land \$1,000,000 is required regardless of the risk. This is expensive for the industry and with a higher level of insurance, those holding 1 million dollar policies are more likely to be sued.

3) Support our effort to make waiver forms legally binding.

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/legdoc.cfm?URL=/docs/2006/bills/intro/H-315.HTM>

Passage of this proposal will help every business and organization that provides recreational services and uses release forms. Guide services and tour operators, summer camps and youth programs, outdoor educational programs are a few of many programs that will be affected. The key is that "inherent risks" are not what we are looking at for our release law. The law of sporting activities already covers "inherent risks". We need release validity for ordinary negligence claims consistent with the law of other states that enforce releases in recreational setting. There is no "essential public interest" in recreational setting and due to the increased risk of injury that can occur in sports settings, our landowners, guides, instructors and sponsors need the protection of release law that other states have. Remember, the activities we are talking about are voluntary...anyone who is not interested in taking full responsibility for injury (absent of course "gross negligence" which can never be released under any state's law) does not have to participate. The parties providing the services are looking for protection from "ordinary negligence".

Respectfully Submitted,
Graydon B. Stevens
VOGA

From: Don Rivers [mailto:djr2148@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2006 9:12 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

Great James
Thanks

Find out about our waterfowl stamp money. Hope it hasn't been stolen and put into the general fund...

Good Morning James,

Tom will be out of the office until next Friday. I believe I can answer your question however. Revenues from the sale of Waterfowl Stamps are put in a specific Waterfowl Fund. These funds are used to purchase wetlands based on decisions made by a Waterfowl Committee. Our Department contact is Bill Crenshaw (his e-mail is above). I suggest you contact him directly if you have more specific questions about the fund.

The balance of this fund at the end of FY 06 (6/30/06) was \$2,134,512.40.

Hope this helps!

From: --James Ehlers-- [mailto:james@elkpublishing.com]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2006 7:39 AM
To: Decker, Tom
Cc: Yacono, Sher; Aronowitz, Jason; Don Rivers
Subject: FW: F&W Funding Task Force

Tom,
Can you please respond to Mr. Rivers' concern below? Thank you.

Sincerely,
James

Dear Colleagues,
Our meeting last night was productive according to each you. Thank you.

Of note, we formed three subcommittees for the purposes of evaluating potential funding mechanisms---the 15 mechanisms we identified last night.

Chairs and their members are as follows:

Tax Committee
Jim Shallow, chair

Evan Hughes
Terry Wilson

General Committee
Paul Karzmarczyk, chair
Elizabeth Courtney
James Ehlers

User Fee Committee
Craig Lantagne, chair
Rick Schoonover
Rich Greenough

Each chair will be responsible for providing a report to the Task Force covering the historical aspects of each mechanism, both in state and out-of-state, a list of pros and cons associated with each, and the political feasibility of each. Preliminary reports will be due at the next meeting, November 13, 5 p.m. The next meeting agenda will also include a review of the F&W Department "needs and wishes" report.

It is suggested that each committee member contact their subcommittee chair as soon as possible, as they will be attempting to contact you.

Thank you for your time and continued efforts.

Sincerely,
James Ehlers

From: Fly Rod Shop [mailto:angler@flyrodshop.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 2:16 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Additional funding idea for Fish & Wildlife Dept

James,

We have a great idea to meet the additional funding requirements for the Fish & Wildlife Department; it is called the **"Sportsman Lottery Ticket"**.

We think that all types of sportsmen/women will be interested in buying lottery tickets knowing that the funds from the lottery would go to programs such as **Hunter Education, Conservation Education, Wildlife Restoration, and Wildlife Habitat.**

Many people in the state enjoy the outdoors and are concerned about the education & conservation of Vermont, but may not buy hunting or fishing licenses, the **"Sportsman Lottery Ticket"**, can offer a different venue for those individuals to contribute to the Fish & Wildlife Department.

In a brief phone conversation to the Lottery Commission, we mentioned this idea and their response was very positive. If you decide to present this idea to the Governor, the Lottery Commission would help support the idea.

Let us know what everyone thinks and we can go over some additional thoughts regarding this.

Talk to you soon,
Karen Guile
Bob Shannon

From: SHALLOW, Jim [mailto:JSHALLOW@audubon.org]
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2006 3:10 PM
To: James Ehlers (E-mail)
Subject: FW: F&W funding plan

James,
FYI.
-jim

-----Original Message-----

From: Don Dickson [mailto:ddickson@burlingtontelecom.net]
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2006 12:12 PM
To: SHALLOW, Jim
Cc: John Harbison
Subject: F&W funding plan

Jim, John mentioned to me this morning that he talked to you about the wildlife partnership and the meeting this Thursday. I just got back from a week-long trip to Michigan last week. While I was there I picked up some League of Women Voters information about the issues on the Michigan ballot next month. Proposal 06-1 is called "a proposed constitutional amendment to require that money held in conservation and recreation funds can only be used for their intended purposes." Many midwestern states amend their constitutions frequently to express voter intent; we do things differently here, but the basic idea might be transferable to Vermont.

The proposed amendment would:

- Create a Conservation and Recreation Legacy Fund within the Constitution and establish existing conservation and recreation accounts as components of the fund;
- Use current funding sources such as state park entrance and camping fees; snowmobile, ORV and boating registration fees; hunting and fishing license fees; taxes and other revenues to fund accounts.
- Establish the current Game and Fish Protection Fund and the Nongame Fish and Wildlife Fund within the Constitution;
- Provide that money held in Funds can only be used for specific purposes related to conservation and recreation and cannot be used for any purpose other than those intended.

I don't know any more than this and I won't have time to research the issue for the next 2 weeks. But you could bring it up at Thursday's meeting and suggest that Vermont's F&W staff could consult with their Michigan counterparts, who have apparently been working on the funding issue longer than Vermont has.

Aside from this suggestion, I also hope that the "partnership" is not totally preoccupied with funding the F&W dept. I would be much more interested in the overall goal of landscape-level habitat conservation for nongame species, especially in the Northeast Kingdom, on both public and private land before real estate developers beat us to the punch. That's more central to the Sierra Club's interests.

~Don

Thank you, Miss Reed.

Sincerely,
James Ehlers

From: Megan Reed

Sent: Wednesday, November 01, 2006 9:19 PM

To: james@elkpublishing.com; jshallow@audubon.org
Subject: Fish & Wildlife Funding

See Attached.

November 1, 2006

Dear Mr. Ehlers,

I am writing in regards to your request for input on Vermont Fish and Wildlife funding. My perspective on this issue comes as a veteran of the Green Mountain Conservation Camp staff. While I have a treasury of memories that illustrate the ways natural resources education enriches the lives of Vermonters, I have one main message that I would like to share in this letter. **My message is this: Fish and Wildlife funding for natural resources education is vital in passing on a heritage of hunting, fishing, and appreciation of this state's natural resources to the next generation.** The conservation camps, project WILD, Lets go Fishing, and other educational outreach programs touch the lives of countless children from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Generations of Vermonters can thank Fish and Wildlife programs for opening their eyes and hands to the riches this state's lakes, rivers, and forests have to offer. It is my hope that funding for natural resources education is generous.

Sincerely,

Megan Reed
714 Corley Road
Wolcott, VT 05680
(802) 888-3000
megan_reed_99@yahoo.com

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Kolsun [<mailto:mkolsun@sover.net>]
Sent: Friday, November 03, 2006 8:15 AM
To: Brian Sullivan
Cc: Mark Scott; James Ehlers
Subject: Re: F&W Funding Task Force

thanks brian.... i'll forward this to mark and james.... good idea...
i'd pay for one also
On Nov 2, 2006, at 3:46 PM, Brian Sullivan wrote:

> Hi Mike,

> This probably wouldn't solve all their funding issues, but their
> calendar is a big hit around here. I usually pick up 3-4 copies of it
> for myself and others, and that prompts a few other people to go find
> copies for themselves. I don't know how many copies get distributed
> each year but I'd buy them for a few bucks. Maybe they can do more
> than recoup the cost of printing them...
> Brian
>
>
>

-----Original Message-----

From: Allan Strong [<mailto:allan.strong@uvm.edu>]
Sent: Friday, November 03, 2006 8:25 AM
To: SHALLOW, Jim
Subject: Nice job!

Hi Jim,

You and James made a nice presentation last night. A few thoughts about some of the funding mechanisms, or rather funding mechanisms unmentioned. I like the idea of the development tax, or something that puts more of the burden on the pressures that degrade habitat quality in the state. I don't know exactly what you had in mind when you discussed this tax, but I was thinking about something more broadly that gets into the realm of ecological economics. Rather than treating environmental quality as an externality, assessing more broadly the impacts on ecological services. So, looking at runoff, air pollution, carbon sequestration, sprawl, etc. Landowners, developers, and businesses that degrade habitat quality pay for the decline in ecological services. It would have the added benefit that decreased revenue to VTFWD would be associated with increased environmental quality.

That obviously doesn't help with a stable funding source, but if this were implemented in a truly effective way, some of the cross-agency services that VTFWD provides might become less necessary.

This is probably something that is too complex to fully evaluate for 15 January, but there might be other aspects to a development tax that could be further evaluated. Another angle to consider is whether or not this could be leveraged into something broader that other departments within ANR could buy into. So, some of the potential revenue would go to Forests and Parks, some would go to Water, etc. This might be something to consider anyway if you decide to go forward with a mechanism like the state sales tax increase.

Although it would require splitting the revenues with another department, it might help broaden the public support, especially if some money went into land purchases for State Parks and WMAs.

Anyway, last thought is that the "non-consumptive" community seemed poorly represented last night, presumably as a result of the roots of this coalition. I'd be happy to try to give you a hand with getting the message out to the birding community once you've gotten closer to your final recommendations.

Good luck and keep up the good work,
Allan

Allan M. Strong
University of Vermont
The Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources
347 Aiken Center
Burlington, VT 05405
802-656-2910

-----Original Message-----

From: Joel Flewelling [<mailto:joel@gwriters.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2006 8:18 AM

To: james@elkpublishing.com; Jim Shallow

Subject: F&W Funding Task Force

James and Jim,

Please see the attached comments about Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Funding.

Joel Flewelling
Ghostwriters Communications
19 Spellman Terr.
PO Box 6004
Rutland, VT 05702-6004
(802) 747-7900 (802) 747-7989 fax

November 6, 2006

James Ehlers, Chair
Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force

Dear Mr. Ehlers,

I am writing today to provide some input on Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department funding of Wildlife Watching programs in the state, specifically the Lake Champlain Birding Trail.

According to the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, fish and wildlife resources are important to Vermont. The state was second only to Alaska in enjoyment of wildlife resources during 2001. The USFWS survey shows that residents and nonresidents who fish, hunt, watch, feed and photograph wildlife spent more than \$386 million on these activities in Vermont. Of that total, 496,000 people observed, fed or photographed wildlife during 2001, spending \$204 million while enjoying these activities. Trip-related expenses, including food and lodging (\$37 million), transportation (\$24 million) and other trip expenses such as equipment rental (\$2 million) amounted to \$63 million.

These expenditures have happened in the absence of any comprehensive program to coordinate nature tourism activities across Vermont. Infrastructure to support nature tourism activities is lacking in much of the state, and marketing of wildlife resources and recreation opportunities has been limited. With an expanding base of tourists looking for high-quality, nature-based experiences, Vermont is poised to take advantage of its nature-based resources and use them to both develop economic opportunities and further conservation efforts.

Experiential tourism can have an enabling impact that will allow Vermont communities to utilize the state's diverse and unique natural resources to attract additional travelers. These travelers will invest in a variety of amenities that will be valued by residents as well. And as the amenity base and quality of life improves, the state will be better positioned to attract and retain high-end industries that are currently locating elsewhere. Combined with specific efforts to develop a diversity of local products and services for this travel market, Vermont has much to gain from the business of nature.

We expect that current wildlife viewing related visitation numbers could at least double to over 1 million visitors per year once appropriate nature tourism development and promotion activities are undertaken throughout the state including those enhancements related to Vermont's State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, the Lake Champlain Birding Trail, and the Connecticut River Birding Trail. According to research by FERMATA, the average direct trip-related spending of a nature tourist is about \$138/person/day (2000 dollars). As such, with a modest investment in planning and development, Vermont could see an influx of at least an additional \$150 million of new dollars into the state's rural economy.

The Lake Champlain Birding Trail (LCBT) was the country's first multi-state birding trail. Since the creation of the LCBT in 2000, nearly 25,000 maps have been distributed. This past summer (2006) the LCBT was named one of the top ten trails to visit by National Wildlife magazine.

A goal in Vermont Fish and Wildlife's Strategic Plan is to "Provide a diversity of safe and ethical fish and wildlife-based activities and opportunities that allow hunting, fishing, trapping, viewing and the utilization of fish, plants. And wildlife resources consistent with the North American Model of fish and wildlife conservation." Strategies for meeting this goal include developing more viewing locations on public lands, partner with other state agencies and private landowners when feasible, and creating or expanding infrastructure for viewing wildlife. Increasing information available to the public on how, when and where to watch wildlife is another strategy in the plan.

I feel there is a budget shortfall when it comes to wildlife watching and the LCBT. The Birding Trail received \$5,000 from the department in 2000 to fund a portion of the cost of printing the map. Since that time the Lake Champlain Birding Trail has not received any state funding. Funding is needed to update and print new maps, create interpretive signs for viewing sites, enhance viewing opportunities and promote the birding trail.

I hope in the future the Fish and Wildlife Department is able to fund birding trail projects and partner with us to achieve goals of the Department's Strategic Plan.

Sincerely,

Joel Flewelling, Project Manager

CC Jim Shallow, co-chair

-----Original Message-----

From: Joel Flewelling [<mailto:joel@gwriters.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2006 4:04 PM

To: james@elkpublishing.com; Jim Shallow

Cc: Mark Scott

Subject: F&W Funding LGF Program

James and Jim,

Attached are comments about funding the Let's Go Fishing Program in Vermont.

Thank you for your time.

Joel Flewelling
Let's Go Fishing Program Coordinator
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
PO Box 6004
Rutland, VT 05702-6004
(802) 747-7900 (802) 747-7989 fax

November 8, 2006

James Ehlers, Chair
Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force

Dear Mr. Ehlers,

I am writing today to provide some input on Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department funding of aquatic education programs in the state, specifically the Let's Go Fishing Program.

Since the Let's Go Fishing Program started about 10 years ago over 200 people have gone through the instructor's training and most have lead fishing clinics with their clubs, camps and schools. This past year about 1,800 people participated in Let's Go Fishing clinics. These clinics are important because they teach the skills necessary for people to become good anglers. The clinics focus on four topic areas, fishing skills, tackle craft, biology and management, and ethics. Our focus is teaching families the skills necessary to enjoy fishing.

Teaching young people to appreciate the natural resources in Vermont is important to ensure the future support of the Fish and Wildlife Department. People who grow up enjoying the outdoors are more likely to support the Department as adults.

The Let's Go Fishing Program is supported by the Sport Fish Restoration Act. Volunteer instructors also donate many hours to the program each year. I feel that Vermont Fish

and Wildlife gets a lot of return on its investment with this program. There is plenty of room for expansion of this program such as hiring a full-time coordinator, offering more training opportunities for instructors and bring the program to more schools. I hope that the program continues to expand and improve in years to come.

If you have more questions about the Let's Go Fishing Program feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dear Evan,
Thank you.

You may consider sharing these comments with your legislators, other interest groups, the Department and the Administration. I am sure you realize it is not our charge to recruit political support for or galvanize opposition against our recommendations.

See you soon.

Sincerely,
James

From: VTGUNS@aol.com [mailto:VTGUNS@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, November 10, 2006 9:20 PM
To: JSHALLOW@audubon.org; Uglydoghunting@aol.com
Cc: Jason.Aronowitz@state.vt.us; james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Re: Funding task force

I have had my own thoughts on the viability of any tax program specifically directed toward F&W. But, I wanted to wait for the election results before I expressed my opinion.

The post election landscape is that this upcoming session is going to have an extremely tight budget and the subject is going to be at or near the top of the agendas of our state and local elected officials. They are hearing that many citizens consider their taxes burden to be overpowering financial drain.

Any proposal to redirect a portion of an existing tax funding stream will be reviewed with great scrutiny. Any proposed expansion in the taxing levels of such any existing tax or any new taxes will receive even more critical review.

I think we all understand, there will be political and lobbying opposition to redirecting existing tax streams and even more of the same to expanded or new taxes.

For this reason, the F&W Dept. has to present convincing budgetary data to assert it is following sound financial policies and practices and accounting data that is billing for its services properly.

I know F&W is giving us figures, but anyone who has been in government wants to know if an agency that is performing collateral services, as does VT F&W, if those services are being tracked and billed out.

The Task Force can propose whatever we want, but there are numerous legislators who are going to have strong opposition to new taxes and we had better have

a F&W Dept. ready with more than "we need X number of dollars" as the justification basis for what we recommend.

Evan

In a message dated 11/3/2006 4:18:15 P.M. Eastern Standard Time, JSHALLOW@audubon.org writes:

Specifically we are looking into the following funding options.

% Sales Tax redirected or increased

Rooms and Meals redirected

Gas tax – redirected

Hazardous material tax

Local options tax

Our charge is to look at the:

Potential Revenue amounts

History (in-state out of state)

Pros and cons

Political feasibility

FYI

The following article appeared in the Manchester Union Leader on November 15th, 2006.

Facing shortfall, Fish and Game seeks new fees

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The state Fish and Game Department wants to impose new fees on boaters and take a portion of the state's rooms and meals tax to ward off a \$5 million budget shortfall.

The department, created in 1935, originally maintained game animal and fish stocks for hunters and fishermen. But its scope has expanded to encompass conservation of wetlands and open space, search and rescue, public education and the policing of off-highway recreational vehicles. Unlike most state departments, Fish and Game is self-supporting and must pay for its operations through fees paid mostly by hunters and anglers.

We're essentially at a turning point where we can't continue to cut and expect to have a viable agency, Lee Perry, the department's executive director, said Monday.

Fish and Game proposes a \$10 annual conservation decal for all non-motorized boats, which would net about \$1.5 million a year. Charging salt-water anglers an annual fee and taking a cut of the rooms and meals tax would raise an additional \$5.6 million.

Department officials hope lawmakers will introduce the proposals in the coming legislative session. Perry also has asked Gov. John Lynch to set aside \$1.6 million annually for two years when the governor presents his budget to lawmakers in February. The money, Perry said, "will allow us to keep people employed.

In the past, the department has boosted revenue by increasing the fees on hunting and fishing licenses. Resident fishing licenses, for example, have increased from \$22.50 to \$35. But as fees increased, the number of licenses has decreased. The number of hunting licenses has dropped by 25 percent since 1995. Fishing licenses have dropped by 10 percent.

During that time, the cost of health insurance premiums and medical benefits for retired department workers has risen 159 percent. Perry said if the department fails to raise money for the budget that begins in July, 28 full-time workers and 36 part-time workers would be without jobs.

Because Fish and Game is responsible for all wildlife resources in the state, not just catering to hunters and fishermen, everyone should pay a fair share," said Rep. Bob L'Heureux, chairman of the House Fish and Game Committee.

FYI

From: Fred Z. Neff [mailto:hastamp@twcny.rr.com]
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2006 1:58 PM
Subject: 2005/2006 H/A Stamp sales

Here are my unofficial financial results for Habitat/Access Stamp sales for DEC's Fiscal Year 2005/2006:

- Qty. of licenses sold - **1,785,749** (note - this is NOT the number of license buyers, but the number of licenses sold. I'm told that there were approximately 900,000 resident and 200,000 non-resident individuals who bought the 1,785,749 licenses).
- Gross Sales - **\$38,875,898.42**

There are 4 categories that delineate the purchase of H/A stamps - Conservation Legacy (Leg.), Conservation Patron (Pat.), Resident (Res.), and Non-Resident (N/R). The results are:

- Leg. - **2414 stamps sold - \$9860.62**
- Pat. - **163 stamps sold - no amount calculated because of confusion on my part as to the accounting numbers for this item. Negligible anyway.**
- Res. - **7927 stamps sold - \$38,221.38**
- N/R - **514 stamps sold - \$2662.44**

GRAND TOTAL FOR H/A STAMPS SOLD FOR FY 2005/2006: 10855 STAMPS - \$50,744.34

Most stamp sales:

1. Tele-Sales - **1055 stamps - \$5195.26** (I have no idea what this is or how the sales are conducted).
2. Onondaga County - **802 stamps - \$3834.30**
3. Dutchess County - **700 stamps - \$3377.32**
4. Erie County - **574 stamps - \$2641.68**
5. Monroe County - **489 stamps - \$2286.02**

Some observations:

1. \$51K is the most I've seen for stamp sales in the 4 years of the program existence (obviously the present fiscal year is not included). Participation is increasing at an excruciatingly slow rate. But at least it's increasing!

2. Non-residents are NOT supporting the H/A Stamp program. Bill S8141 would correct this by making the stamp mandatory for non-residents. Depending on cost (\$5 up to \$10), this would result in \$1M to \$2M annually for habitat/access. The last status I saw for S8141 is that it was sent to the Senate Rules Committee on 6/8/06.
3. Residents are also NOT really supporting the program (8K buyers out of 900K total buyers). A mandatory stamp for residents (\$5) would result in an additional \$4.5M annually for habitat/access.
4. I do believe that the lapel pin offer is an excellent approach that has impacted sales positively. It should be continued.

Hunting, fishing licenses may cost more - *a lot more*

November 22, 2006

By John Bronz, Capital News Service* (Michigan State University School of Journalism) bronzie5@yahoo.com

The Crawford County Avalanche

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To submit a Letter to the Editor: avalanche@i2k.net

One state representative is outraged over a proposed boost in fees for hunting and fishing licenses, recommended by the National Resources Commission.

Brian Palmer**, R-Romeo, is upset because Proposal 1 -- which amends Michigan's Constitution to require fees from hunting and fishing licenses to go only to conservation -- passed in the November election, and now the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wants the Legislature to increase license fees.

"I was afraid this would happen, I voted yes in the House to put this proposal on the ballot to let the people decide," said Palmer, a member of the Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use and Environment Committee. "But right when they secure additional funding they go and do this.

"I think the public got bamboozled. I bet if the people could do it over again, it might be different," he said.

The fee would quadruple, from \$6 to \$24, for a senior deer license, for hunters 65 and older, more than triple, from \$15 to \$50, for a bear license and more than double, from \$30 to \$75, for a combination deer-hunting license. A combo license may be used for archery, firearm or muzzleloader hunting, but the hunter must purchase two kill tags up front.

"We wanted to get in line with other senior citizen discounts like the AARP," said Denny Grinold of Lansing, a member of the commission working group and state affairs officer for the Michigan Charter Boat Association. "So we went with 20 percent."

The Game and Fish Fund is expected to have a deficit of \$45 million by 2010-2011. **Some programs would be cut if the recommendation isn't passed**, according to the commission.

"The state cut the tax revenue from the general fund," said Grinold. "Revenue coming into the fund dropped from 38 percent to around 9 percent. So the commission decided to recommend the increase."

Among the programs **likely** to be cut if the measure doesn't pass are fish surveys, Inland Fisheries Grant Program, habitat restoration on the upper AuSable River and facility upkeep.

"We need the funds to continue planting coho salmon in the Platte River," said Grinold. "We had to stop this year due to a lack of funds, but with the increases we would be able to start it again."

The Platte River is near Sleeping Bear Dunes, on Lake Michigan's shoreline.

Grinold said **licenses sales have declined steadily since 1998**, and with increases in health insurance and fuel, **the fee changes are necessary**.

In 2005, the state sold 1.16 million fishing licenses and 789,000 hunting licenses.

Daniel Zywocki, an Ohio member of the Ann Arbor Trout Unlimited, said, "I feel that people in Michigan don't realize how lucky they are, they have the best blue water trout streams in America. So I pay a premium to fish in Michigan."

Zywocki would have to pay **\$80, up from \$42, to fish in Michigan.**

As for younger enthusiasts, a junior archery license would increase **from \$7.50 to \$15**, and a junior small game license **from \$1 to \$10.**

However, Palmer said **the DNR needs to stop taxing youths and seniors, and start learning how to operate on a budget.**

"Times are tough in Michigan. Unemployment is high and Michigan's economy is bad. [The DNR] can't tax the public because [it] can't operate properly," said Palmer. "I would vote for a fee decrease."

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<http://avalanche.townnews.com/articles/2006/11/22/news/news04.txt>

****State Representative Brian Palmer**

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*The **Capital News Service** is a [wire service](#) based at [Michigan State University](#) in [East Lansing](#), [Michigan](#). CNS covers the [state capital](#) in [Lansing](#) for various member papers from September to early May. The service is headed by [Eric Freedman](#), a [Pulitzer](#)-winning reporter formerly of the [Detroit News](#). Correspondents are selected from [juniors](#) and [seniors](#) in the School of Journalism by an application process. Source: http://www.search.com/reference/Capital_News_Service_%28MI%29

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Dear Subcommittee Chairs,

Please see the offer from Dennis Shaffer of The Trust for Public Land. Feel free to contact him directly should you desire. He is on the copy line.

Sincerely,
James

From: Dennis Shaffer [mailto:Dennis.Shaffer@tpl.org]

Sent: Friday, November 10, 2006 4:25 PM

To: jshallow@audubon.org; james@elkpublishing.com

Subject: Fish and Wildlife Dept. Funding Task Force

Jim and James: I left a phone message for Jim, but thought I would e-mail both of you about the purpose of my call. I am wondering if some of the conservation finance information that the Trust for Public Land has gathered from around the country would be useful for your task group. It might help you to shortcut some of the research/data collection for the task group. Our national conservation finance department, based in Boston, has gathered a wealth of information about conservation finance initiatives from all across the country. I am guessing that your group might benefit from their research and data collection relative to funding for fish and wildlife agencies. I would be happy to talk with one or both of you about TPL as possible resource for information if you would like.

Just give me a call: 802.223.1373 ext. 11.

Dennis

Dennis L. Shaffer
Field Office Director
The Trust for Public Land
3 Shipman Place
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(802) 223-0451 fax
dennis.shaffer@tpl.org
www.tpl.org

The Trust for Public Land - publisher of Land&People magazine. Available by free subscription at www.tpl.org/freemag

-----Original Message-----

From: N.H. Fish and Game [<mailto:lpoinier@wildlife.state.nh.us>]
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2006 4:57 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: NHF&G Op-Ed from Director Lee Perry: Saving Our Wildlife Legacy

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SAVING OUR WILDLIFE LEGACY

By Lee E. Perry, Director, N.H. Fish and Game Department

Something everyone has a stake in -- the future of our state's wildlife and wild places -- is at risk. The guardian of these resources, the N.H. Fish and Game Department, will be out of money soon, unless its antiquated funding structure is changed. This financial crisis comes at a critical time, when New Hampshire is losing 18,000 acres of land to development each year, placing wildlife, habitat and outdoor recreational opportunities in jeopardy.

Fish and Game today is a modern wildlife agency responsible for conserving the state's fish, wildlife and marine resources -- a complex organization with an ever-expanding set of duties and mandates that benefits all New Hampshire's citizens and visitors. Our work protects open space, scenic beauty and wildlife resources that create jobs and fuel our economy as people enjoy these resources.

As has been widely reported, Fish and Game faces a financial shortfall because revenue is not keeping pace with the rising cost of doing business.

The department works for everyone, but hunters and anglers in New Hampshire

-- about a quarter of the state's population -- have always paid for the agency, and the benefits we provide, through license fees and Federal excise taxes on their equipment. The people of New Hampshire contribute \$50,000 to Fish and Game each year from the General Fund as matching funds for nongame wildlife and habitat conservation -- just

3.8 cents per resident. The vast majority of New Hampshire's state agencies are supported almost entirely by the state's General Fund.

Across the U.S., fish and wildlife agencies are struggling to survive under the traditional funding model. Already, 31 states have changed how they fund their state wildlife agencies, to allow them to meet their missions without relying solely on hunting and fishing fees. Some get money from income or sales tax; others, including Vermont and Maine, from annual General Fund appropriations.

What can N.H. Fish and Game do to get on firm financial footing? As a stopgap measure, we've asked Governor Lynch to put \$1.6 million per year of General Fund revenue into the Fish and Game budget in FY2008 and 2009.

Without these funds as a temporary fix, we will have to lay off as many as 28 full-time workers and eliminate 36 part-time positions, as well as closing hatcheries and regional offices -- dramatically reducing our ability to serve New Hampshire.

In the past, we've coped with budget crunches by raising license fees, but that won't work this time. They're already the highest in New England; also, the data tell us that we'd lose money after another fee increase because participation would go down. The Fish and Game budget is bare-bones, totaling \$27 million annually -- we've already eliminated staff and dug deep for possible efficiencies.

And so, we need a long-term plan. One proposed legislative strategy is to capture some of the \$579 million that hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers pump into the state's economy each year by allocating a small part of the state rooms and meals tax to Fish and Game. Here's how it would work:

Currently, hotel and restaurant patrons pay an 8% tax. Some of that money goes to the Department of Revenue to administer the program; what's left is divided between municipalities (40%) and the General Fund (60%). Fish and Game seeks to capture a small portion -- just 4% of the 60% that goes to the General Fund, or about \$4.6 million. Since hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers pay about 7.4% of the total rooms and meals tax collected in New Hampshire -- more than \$13 million annually -- we believe that it makes sense to reinvest some of the money into the resources that generate it.

Many citizens and media outlets seem to understand Fish and Game's need for a new revenue source, and have offered support. Even those who have criticized our approach acknowledge that everyone who benefits from Fish and Game's work should be asked to contribute. As a recent Concord Monitor editorial put it: "The truth is that everyone reaps rewards from the department's work, and that's true in spades in a tourist state like New Hampshire. If everyone benefits, everyone should pay."

In the coming months, the State Legislature will consider several measures to provide the funding needed to save New Hampshire's wildlife legacy. Their actions will determine not only the future of Fish and Game, but of the wildlife, woods and waters that add so much to our quality of life.

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Hunting for New Targets

New Hampshire paddlers have a question about a \$10 fee that the state's Fish and Game Department has proposed levying on canoes and kayaks: Why should they be targeted by a cash-starved state agency when numerous other groups that benefit from its work will continue to get off scot-free? It's a legitimate question, but it presupposes that logic applies to how the state goes about raising its money.

For many years, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department has been self-supporting, relying primarily on the license fees paid by those who hunt and fish. The system worked well until recently, when a significant decline in license-holders and an expansion of the department's duties created a financial crunch. Fish and Game officials now estimate that they face a \$5 million to \$6 million annual deficit if they don't find new sources of cash. Increasing license fees isn't an option; the department has done that twice in the last five years, and further increases would just lead to a drop in license sales and no additional revenue.

To eliminate its budget shortfall, the department has proposed several measures: earmarking a percentage of the state's 8 percent tax on rooms and meals; licensing salt-water fishermen; auctioning off moose-hunting permits; and requiring owners of nonmotorized boats to buy a \$10 conservation decal. The initial reaction, from paddlers at least, has not been encouraging.

"The whitewater community would be getting a small amount of benefits compared to what they'd be putting in," complained Hopkinton kayaker Bob Berliner to a *Concord Monitor* reporter. "Why should I pay a fee when they're not assessing people who surf or boogie board?"

Or birdwatch or hike, for that matter. A wide range of outdoors enthusiasts benefit from the department's work in wildlife biology and habitat protection, but only canoers and kayakers would get stuck with this particular fee -- presumably because they use watercraft on which they can stick a decal, making it easy to monitor compliance. We doubt that a \$10 annual fee would create much of a burden for most, but it does raise a question of fairness.

Then again, the state's grab-bag approach to taxation -- tax a little here, impose a minor fee over there -- is necessitated by its refusal to establish an adequate revenue base through a broad-based tax that would spread the burden more widely and fairly. In that regard, the department's proposal to put a claim on a percentage of the rooms and meals tax is welcome -- both because it would cast the net wider and because it would move the department away from the self-funding model. Legislative opposition to dedicating specific taxes for specific purposes, though, raises questions about its chances for approval. Our guess is that the legislature will try to solve this minor budget crisis by intensifying the game of Let's Find the Easiest Group to Nick for Small Amounts of Revenue. It won't be pretty, but at least paddlers will feel less discriminated against.

[Anglers - and the Economy - Are Suffering From Overcrowded Boat Ramps](#)

Overcrowding at boat ramps has become a significant problem for many U.S. anglers. According to a November poll conducted by AnglerSurvey.com, nearly 11% of anglers have had to cancel a fishing trip due to overcrowded ramps.

According to Rob Southwick, the economist at AnglerSurvey.com, "The ramifications can be significant. There are 35 million anglers in the U.S. who fish 557 million days annually and spend \$75 per fishing trip. When 11% of anglers cancel just one trip a year, they also cancel \$287 million in fishing expenditures. That hurts."

Considering the multiplier effects, the loss of \$287 million in sport fishing sales also reduces state and federal tax revenues by \$50 million and U.S. jobs by 7,400. Total economic activity in the U.S. is reduced by \$802 million, and people's paychecks and business profits decrease by \$208 million. "Additional or expanded boat ramps in many areas may be worth the investment," says Mr. Southwick.

AnglerSurvey.com is a monthly online survey of anglers nationally providing industry and policymakers with information on sportfishing trends and activity. For more information, contact Rob Southwick at Rob@southwickassociates.com.

Media Contact:

Rob Southwick
(904) 277-9765

Rob@southwickassociates.com

From: John Harbison [mailto:johnharbison@adelphia.net]
Sent: Monday, December 04, 2006 9:39 AM
To: james@elkpublishing.com

By the way, I heard that N.H. Fish & Game is pushing for a fixed percentage of the state's room and meal tax devoted to agency funding. Perhaps something you guys should consider for Vermont.

From: wewentfishin
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2006 2:18 PM
To: james@elkpublishing.com
Subject: Editorial comment from Matt at Arrowdynamic Solutions

James...

I ALWAYS enjoy reading your editorials...you craft words with the best I've read anywhere!

The context caught my attentions in a huge manner. I have a larger perspective being the manufacturer of broadheads and having received a deaf ear to my concerns from the Archery Trade Association on the subject.

I pay an 11% Federal Excise tax for each package of broadheads I sell above and beyond our normal level of tax burden on my business. There is a very fine line of those specific product manufacturers responsible for producing these funds. These are items such as anything attached to an arrow or bow or the bow itself. This is a very general description of those specific items but you get the picture...the details are in the federal tax book...Form 720 specifically...All these funds generated are supposedly used to fund Fish and Wildlife, other outdoor supportive efforts...

My point is this to kinda use your analogy....you at the state level in association with your Governor are attempting to fix a flat tire to carry your truck down the road until the next flat tire occurs...the reality of the situation is that your truck has a cracked block! Fix the national problem..you fix every department budget problem in every state AND create an avenue for having such a large flux of funds available for each state REAL progress can be made.

How to accomplish this? Simple....ANY manufacturing company that sells obvious products targeting the Hunting/Shooting/Fishing related outdoor sports bears the burden of paying an Excise Tax...not just singling out those few manufactures making some specific items like broadheads, arrows and the like...

More to the point....Two things can happen...you lower the 11% Excise tax to 2% or 3%...You spread that burden to companies like Mossy Oak, Real Tree, Tree Stand companies, etc etc etc...any number of the hundreds of major and minor manufacturers currently not paying ANY federal excise tax...Overnight...your coffers are filled overflowing due to a more broad based and ethical application of the excise tax...lowering the tax number to be less of a restrictive burden with only the 2 to 3% application to all those companiesthier profits will easily accomodate such a small number and integration into the system of supporting the base from which their profits come from...hunting/shooting/fishing outdoor enthusiasts who continue to go to the cash register paying for thier products.

If a company profits from it...they should support our hunting/fishing heriatge.

Just my two cents worth but I have no problem rattling the cage of our Governor here in Texas in concert with your Governor in Vermont...together...I think we can chunk out that old, outdated engine and put a new one in that will last the test of time as the funds will be there to pay for new tires, transmission and tune ups.....Benefiting ALL current and future sportsmen and women...

Look forward to your creative thoughts on my suggestion.

Respectfully,
Matthew Futtere
Owner / Inventor

Arrowdynamic Solutions

<http://outdoors.maintoday.com/hunting/060311allen.shtml>

Saturday, March 11, 2006

Can Maine's declining hunter numbers be reversed?

Ken Allen

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Maine's hunting license sales have shown a long-term decrease in the last 36 years, but that trend has not always been the case. Throughout the first three-quarters of the 20th century, hunting license sales continued rising until 1970 when it hit 212,080. The rapid-growth years lasted from 1940 when the figure was below 100,000 through 1970. (The big spurt gained momentum after World War II.)

Over the last three decades, though, hunter numbers have fallen to about 170,000, according to a recent Wildlife Division and Management Report put out by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W). Admittedly, license sales have shown minor, short-term gains in the last 36 years, but the overall trend has been downward.

These days, hunters have several impediments, explaining why DIF&W sells approximately 42,000 less licenses. Five leading reasons follow: 1) Hunting-license costs, 2) hunter-orange-clothing expense, 3) hunter-safety-course requirement, 4) development eating up hunting land and 5) negative publicity toward hunters.

Reason 1 seems like small potatoes, but it does discourage hunter participation. Reasons 2 and 3 have practically eliminated shooting mortalities, but these perfectly legitimate obstacles have added to dropping hunter numbers. Reasons 4 in particular and 5 hinder hunter recruitment.

Twenty-five years ago, I was shooting my mouth off in an article, alleging that license sales and safety clothing were a paltry expense when a fellow school teacher set me straight. He had three teenage boys 16 years and older who hunted, and even in those years, it set him back considerably to get the four of them into the deer woods,

duck marshes and bird covers.

These days, a combination fishing-and-hunting licenses for four residents 16 years or older spoils the looks of a \$100 bill. If that same family also bowhunted in the statewide season, participated in the expanded archery option, decided to bear hunt from August through October and bought a muzzle-loading permit (should one or all of the family members not shoot a deer in the regular firearms season), then it would cost over \$100 each or approximately \$450 for all four. This does not count buying duck stamps to chase waterfowl.

Add to that \$20 to \$30 each for an initial expense of a hunter-orange hat and vest, and then that overall figure crawls up to around \$550 per year for a family of four. In short, we're talking serious pocket change.

Even with all that money, hunting (and fishing) license fees appear to be a bargain price, and to prove a point, lots of hunters are fond of dividing 365 days into the price of a license and claiming cost as pennies a day. Most deer hunters are lucky to get out four or five days per season, though, so we need to be careful which figure we use to divide into license costs.

Along that line of expenditures, an outdoors writer friend goes to the Sportsman's Congress most years and loudly compares a license fee to the price of going to the movies or out to dinner, where a couple might spend \$20 to \$30. The trouble with that analogy is obvious to a guy like me who grew up in rural Maine. I know folks who cannot afford \$20 for a movie and popcorn for two or dinner at a restaurant that might run \$30 per couple. Licenses come damned hard to folks with low incomes.

The hunter-safety-course requirement and mandatory hunter orange have saved countless hunter lives -- perhaps as many as 450 humans since the laws were initiated in the 1970s. People in 2006 have forgotten or perhaps the younger ones never knew that hunting deaths in the 1950 and '60s rose as high as 19 a season.

These days, I strongly feel that shooting deaths and injuries have dropped dramatically because of hunter orange. The hunter-safety course must help, too, but it comes with a cost best described by a quick anecdote.

My two daughters spent their childhood playing interscholastic field hockey and basketball, which made hunting out of the

question. Last year, my youngest daughter, a 16 year old then, sprung a request on me in the first week of the regular firearms season for deer. She wanted to go hunting. In the old days, I would have taken her shooting and when satisfied with her competence, we would have headed to the woods. These days, though, she couldn't buy a license without the hunter-safety course.

The next summer, she was not interested in hunting, so a hunter-safety course interested her little. In short, folks must plan ahead, which doesn't take into consideration the whims of 16-year-olds.

Whether it is right or wrong, the hunter-safety course stops these people who have an instant yearn to hunt, but recently, George Smith told me about a plan the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine would like to pass in legislature. Instead of having people sit in a classroom and listen to a lecturer, newcomers to hunting would have an option to take a computer course that allowed active participation from the student.

One of the ideas being kicked around includes a full, field-training day after the computer part. Of course, this would eliminate the spontaneous recruitment of hunters just as surely as the current course does now. This whole idea is in the early stages, and I shall report more on it later.

Here's another little tidbit for folks aghast at the idea of changing hunter-safety-course requirements. Fishing is far more dangerous than hunting, and in some years, as many as a dozen anglers may drown participating in this seemingly benign hobby. On top of that, injuries are common because of slippery rocks and docks and of sharp hooks impaled into body parts -- such as an eye. In addition to dangers, fishing involves complex considerations -- like is that 8-inch, speckled fish a brown trout or endangered Atlantic salmon. A mistaken identity could cost big bucks. Considering the above, it's amazing that no one has come up with a fishing-safety-course requirement.

You must ask yourself why a hunter-safety course is important and a fishing-safety course isn't, particularly when you realize that some years not one hunter dies in a shooting fatality, thanks mostly to hunter orange. When one does occur, it's often self-inflicted.

Even more compelling, some states and provinces have more hunting deaths from people falling out of tree stands than being shot.

The bottom line is this: Because of dropping hunting numbers, anything that changes that trend without endangering folks is a huge plus to the sport's future.

Ken Allen, of Belgrade Lakes, is a writer, editor and photographer. To reach him, e-mail: kallyn800@aol.com

Dear James and Jim,

I am writing on behalf of Central Vermont Trout Unlimited a conservation organization based in Chittenden County with over 350 members. We are concerned about the long-term decline in funding for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. This Department performs a critical service to Vermont conserving wildlife resources and their habitats. Vermont's wildlife is a resource that Vermonters and others take for granted. However, the continued short-fall in Departmental funding, unfilled positions and increased responsibilities of agency staff have created a fiscal emergency for the Department.

We applaud the legislature's foresight in addressing this problem by creating the Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force which you have helpfully chaired. We believe that this first step is critical in addressing both the needs of the Department and the potential mechanisms that would provide a long-term, stable source of funding. Although much of the Department's funding comes from hunting and fishing license sales, their responsibilities have grown far beyond the purview of game species. The recent completion of the Vermont Wildlife Action Plan outlines the steps that are necessary to conserve all of Vermont's wildlife of greatest conservation need. Continued expansion of Fish and Wildlife responsibilities creates backbreaking demands on a Department staff already stretched to the limit. New issues on the horizon such as avian flu, chronic wasting disease, siting of wind turbines, and increasing recreational use of state-owned Wildlife Management Areas will only exacerbate this situation.

We strongly support a broad-based, stable, and significant source of long-term funding for Vermont's Department of Fish and Wildlife such as a reallocation of a small portion of the state sales tax. Such an approach spreads the funding responsibility among all Vermonters and non-residents alike, the ultimate beneficiaries of a financially healthy Fish and Wildlife Department. It is unfair to continue placing the bulk of funding on the hunting and fishing public. We ask that you include and prioritize a reapportionment of the sales tax in your Task Force recommendations. In turn, we will aggressively support such action. Without adequate funding for the Department, the wildlife resources that all Vermonters take for granted will be in jeopardy.

Sincerely,

Dana J. Baker, Conservation Director
Central Vermont Trout Unlimited
12 Sherry Rd.
South Burlington, VT 05403
(802) 860-7375
danajbaker@yahoo.com

This is written to applaud the effort to provide the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department with a source of dedicated funding. The Department provides essential, expert services to the state that far exceed the needs of game species, and its funding should not rely only on hunting fees. A small portion of the Sales Tax seems a workable solution.

If the proposal reaches the legislature, I would be happy to testify concerning the importance of the Department to the State of Vermont.

Yours sincerely,

Robert A. Lloyd
Former President
Vermont Coverts, Woodlands for Wildlife

Jim & James

The Vermont Sierra Club wants to be on record in favor of funding the state Fish and Wildlife Department, to the extent possible, from either the rooms and meals tax (our preferred source) or the sales and use tax. We appreciate the Task Force's effort to find a stable funding source that will support the Department's important work.

John Harbison
Vermont Chapter Chair

Dear James and Jim,

I am writing on behalf of Otter Creek Audubon, a chapter of Audubon Vermont representing about 350 members in Addison County. We are concerned about the long-term decline in funding for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

We applaud the legislature's foresight in addressing this problem by creating the Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force which you have helpfully chaired. We believe that this first step is critical in addressing both the needs of the Department and the potential mechanisms that would provide a long-term, stable source of funding.

At our January Board Meeting we endorsed the proposal from the Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force and the Vermont Wildlife Partnership to allocate 1/8 of 1% of the sales tax to help fund the Fish and Wildlife Department. We strongly support a broad-based, stable, and significant source of long-term funding for the Department. Such an approach appropriately spreads the funding responsibility among all Vermonters.

Sincerely,

Mike Winslow
President

Tovar Cerulli
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Plainfield, VT 05667
802.426.3065
tovar.cerulli@gmail.com

Op-Ed commentary - DRAFT
864 words

Our Chance to Invest in Vermont's Wildlife

A loon's wild serenade woke us several times the first night. Early the next morning, as I was spincasting out into the rising mist, a great blue heron swept along the far shore. On a short walk, my wife Catherine and our young Lab spent a few minutes watching a moose and also flushed a grouse. When we took the canoe out, a pair of common mergansers cruised the water with us. That late April weekend in Groton State Forest would have been empty without wildlife, as would many other parts of the year: A walk around Berlin Pond in May when we saw nearly 40 kinds of birds including a bald eagle in the distance. A late summer paddle on a backwoods pond where Catherine and I drifted for a long while, binoculars glued to our eyes, admiring cedar waxwings flitting among the trees – that perfect mask and sleek crest, that wingtip carefully dipped in red! And the second Sunday of November, which found me hauling on a rope, helping my hunting companion drag a heavy-bodied 7-point buck over the steep, bony ridges of his woodlot.

One way or another, I think every Vermonter's quality of life depends on wildlife – diverse species inhabiting a beautiful, diverse landscape – and on the stewardship of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. Some of us hunt, fish, or trap. Some watch for falcons or migrating warblers. We all enjoy seeing deer, moose, pileated woodpeckers and the occasional bear, fisher, or bobcat.

Many of our livelihoods also depend on good wildlife stewardship. Some of us produce crops or forest products, and depend on the management of deer and moose populations to keep the working landscape viable in the long run. Others run businesses that cater to outdoor enthusiasts of all stripes. And our entire state economy benefits immensely from visitors drawn by Vermont's wildlife and natural beauty.

But funding for that stewardship is in trouble. For decades, most fish and wildlife departments have been funded by sales of hunting and fishing licenses and by federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing gear. There are two problems with this system.

First, it has become impractical. In recent years, departments across the country have been coming up short on money. In Vermont, we are already drawing \$2 million per year from the General and Transportation Funds to support Fish and Wildlife. The Department has \$12 million in revenue and is operating on \$14 million, but it needs

closer to \$18 million to carry out its current responsibilities. And with our federally mandated Wildlife Action Plan indicating many game and non-game species in urgent need of conservation, demands are increasing. The Department will need more money to meet those demands and become a pro-active steward of our wildlife legacy. Like many other states, we clearly need more than a band-aid. We need an additional source of long-term, dedicated funding.

Second, it's a mismatch. When I hunt or fish, my dollars directly support the Department's work. But when I put in a kayak at a Fish and Wildlife access area just to paddle, or enjoy Vermont's wildlife in a thousand other ways, I am not asked to contribute anything. Such narrow dependence on hunters and anglers makes little sense when everyone, resident and visitor alike, benefits from wildlife stewardship. The current system fails to reflect the variety of services the Department offers to the public and its broad mission statement: "the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont." To make things more equitable and to insure a wide range of non-game conservation and education programs, we can't rely solely on game-related money.

We now have an opportunity to change the system. Recognizing the Department's financial problems, the legislature appointed the Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force to come up with recommended solutions. The Task Force is about to send its findings back to the legislature.

One proposed solution is to dedicate a small fraction of the state sales tax to Fish and Wildlife. The idea has many merits. It would address the financial problem by adding a new source of reliable, long-term funding. On a \$10 sale generating 60 cents in sales tax, Fish and Wildlife would receive 1.25 cents. This would bring in about \$7 million – just one-sixth of a penny out of each dollar the state spends annually – putting the Department budget at roughly \$19 million. It would also address the mismatch problem: everyone who enjoys Vermont's wildlife would be supporting its stewardship and the Department would be able to boost its non-game efforts. Both Missouri and Arkansas have such systems in place and are able to fund vigorous game and non-game programs.

It's time for Vermont to take the lead in the Northeast. While we may not agree with all of Fish and Wildlife's policies or budgeting priorities, we would be foolish to force the Department to further restrict its programs. Recent surveys indicate that Vermonters and visitors recognize the importance of our fish and wildlife and are willing to invest in their protection and improvement. With vision and political will, we can make that investment happen. Let's not miss the opportunity.

Tovar Cerulli
Marshfield, Vermont

Champlain Valley Clayplain Forest Project

Marc Lapin, Ph.D., Director

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15 January 2007

Jim Shallow

James Ehlers

Co-Chairs, Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force

Dear Jim and James,

I am aware that the task force which you are leading is contemplating funding issues and dilemmas for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. I write to express my support for a dedicated funding option. Rather than re-iterate a long list of points which you have doubtlessly discussed at length, I would simply say that we all know that the traditional funding sources for the Department have waned at the same time that interest in systematic and cohesive conservation and management of all of the state's native biodiversity has increased. In order to do the job, to carry out the mission of the Department and serve the biota as well as the citizens of Vermont, conservationists need money.

Based upon my years of work with the Department, dating back to 1991, I am aware that departmental resources are now, more than ever in this 15-year period, insufficient to adequately carry out the mission and legislative (and non-legislative, but publicly led) mandates of the Department. A dedicated funding source is necessary. Certainly, 'nongame' species and the natural communities and ecological systems of Vermont cannot rely upon funding from only fees paid by hunters, anglers, and motorized recreation vehicle owners. A broad-based funding structure is not only needed, but is also fair. All of us benefit from the conservation of life-support systems that is carried out by the Fish and Wildlife Department. It appears that dedicating a portion of the sales tax to fund Department activities would provide a relatively stable and a fair revenue source.

Additional funding sources must not be ruled out to supplement a sales tax portion.

The nature of Vermont is one of the state's greatest assets. Vermont is known for its natural beauty and abundant opportunities for nature conservation, nature recreation, and general nature appreciation. We must not let the changing patterns of outdoor activities detract from the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Department to conduct its much needed operations; the Department's conservation activities benefit all corners of the state's environment and economy. Conservation in Vermont also sends ripples outward beyond the state's borders.

Sincerely,

Marc Lapin

Marc Lapin

Jim Shallow, Co-chair
Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Funding Task Force

Fish and Wildlife are integral parts of the Vermont landscape and provide an exhilarating experience for both residents and visitors.

Visitors coming to Vermont for fish and wildlife, whether it be for fishing, hunting or wildlife viewing, are a major boost to the state's economy.

From many aspects, it is to the state's benefit that its Department of Fish and Wildlife be adequately funded to properly manage its fish and wildlife resources.

Demands on the Department are increasing and license revenues are declining.

Therefore, the majority of the Vermont Woodlands Association's Board of Directors feel that a dedicated source of revenue should be allocated to the Department to help fund its activities on an annual basis.

Put Blodgett, President,
Vermont Woodlands Association

TO: James Ehlers, Co-Chair, Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force
james@elkpublishing.com
Jim Shallow, Co-Chair, Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force
jshallow@audubon.org

RE: Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Funding

Dear Mr. Ehlers and Mr. Shallow:

I am writing on behalf of Vermont Ducks Unlimited, a wetlands conservation organization with 2,150 members in the state. DU has a long history of partnering with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) on wetland conservation projects, protecting and restoring approximately almost 3,000 acres since 1985. DU is concerned about the long-term decline in funding for the VFWD. This Department performs a critical service to Vermont's citizens and tourists by conserving wildlife resources and their habitats, which generates significant income to the state and supports many communities. However, the continued short-fall in Departmental funding, unfilled positions and increased responsibilities of agency staff have created a fiscal emergency for the Department.

We applaud the legislature's foresight in addressing this problem by creating the Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force which you have helpfully chaired. We believe that this first step is critical in addressing both the needs of the Department and the potential mechanisms that would provide a long-term, stable source of funding. Although much of the Department's funding comes from hunting and fishing license sales, their responsibilities have grown far beyond the purview of game species. The recent completion of the Vermont Wildlife Action Plan outlines the steps that are necessary to conserve all of Vermont's wildlife of greatest conservation need. Continued expansion of Fish and Wildlife responsibilities creates backbreaking demands on a Department staff already stretched to the limit. New issues on the horizon such as avian flu, chronic wasting disease, wind turbines locations, and increasing recreational use of state-owned Wildlife Management Areas will only exacerbate this situation.

DU strongly support a broad-based, stable, and significant source of long-term funding for Vermont's Department of Fish and Wildlife such as a reallocation of a small portion of the state sales tax. Several other states (MO and AR) have such a tax that has resulted in great support for the state's natural resources and their management. Such an approach spreads the funding responsibility among all Vermonters and non-residents alike, the ultimate beneficiaries of a financially healthy Fish and Wildlife Department. We ask that you include and prioritize a reapportionment of the sales tax in your Task Force recommendations. In turn, we will aggressively support such action. With a new source of funding for the Department, the wildlife resources that all Vermonters rely on, including local communities, will be greatly benefited, and result in a healthy sustainable future for our great state. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rick Irick
VT State Chairman

Cc: Wayne LaRoche
Ray Whitemore
Phil Warren

Jim Shallow and Jim Ehlers, Co-Chairs
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Funding Task Force

February 2, 2007

Dear Jim and Jim:

Thank you for co-chairing the Funding Task Force to address the vital matter of adequately and fairly funding our Fish and Wildlife Department, now and into the future.

Forest Watch has long been concerned about the anemic budget of the “Nongame and Natural Heritage” program, which oversees the conservation and management of the vast majority of wild plant and animal species in the state. We have also foreseen that the department’s heavy dependency on license sales—in a society where interest in consumptive uses of wildlife is generally declining—would eventually lead to a revenue crisis for the entire department.

These problems, as you are well aware, are only being exacerbated by new and ongoing threats to habitat and biodiversity by development and habitat fragmentation, air and water pollution, exotic invasive species, and of course, looming over all else, global warming.

We are generally in support of the proposed recommendations of the Task Force. We have a few others to add, which we hope you will consider. We suggest the following because they are broad-based across the population, and tax activities that are generally detrimental to wildlife (i.e., habitat conversion to residential, business, and industrial development; automobile use and gas consumption.)

- Take a percent (e.g., 10%) of the current 1.25% property transfer tax on sales of existing structures or undeveloped property
- For sales of new homes and new commercial property, increase the rate of the property transfer tax (e.g. to 1.5%) and allocate the balance to the Fish and Wildlife Department (difference between tax at 1.25 and tax at 1.5)
- Take a small percent (e.g. 1%) of car registrations
- Take a small percent (e.g. 1%) of new driver licenses
- Add one percent to the gas tax, for allocation to Department

In keeping with a move toward more broad-based revenue sources, Forest Watch also strongly advocates that the Department eliminate its preferential treatment of hunters and anglers at Fish and Wildlife access areas. We believe that recreational paddlers will be happy to comply with new requirements for “access licenses” so long as they are granted equal standing with consumptive wildlife users at these sites.

We are interested to know how the new revenues will be disbursed. Will they be targeted to specific programs within the Department, or will they go to a general pool and be disbursed according to the budgetary priorities of any given year?

Forest Watch believes “non-game” wildlife must be the main beneficiaries of the newly diversified funding. We recommend that any legislation authorizing these new sources include specific language to channel a majority of the monies (over 60%) to non-big game wildlife management, research, and conservation. Not only is this where the biggest boost in revenues is needed, in our opinion, but also, the citizens contributing to the much larger and diversified revenue base will demand a more fair apportionment of Department dollars.

Finally, while this may not be within the purview of the Funding Task Force, please consider recommending greater representative diversity among those holding positions on Vermont’s Fish and Wildlife Board. Extending the responsibility for financing the Department to all Vermonters will be a good thing for Vermont’s wildlife. So too will be expanding the degree to which all Vermonters can feel engaged in and have a voice in the policy decisions made by the Board and carried out by the Department.

Thanks again to both of you and to all the other members of the Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force for your important work. We look forward to reading your final recommendations, and to being a part of the effort to increase, stabilize, and diversify support for Vermont’s wildlife heritage.

Sincerely,

Mollie Matteson
Forest Watch Deputy Director