

# VERMONT ENDANGERED SPECIES COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES

September 22, 2022

### Hybrid Meeting – in person in the Catamount Room at National Life

*We are now recording meetings and taking abbreviated minutes, and will provide both on the ESC webpage. We have migrated our Google Drive to the FWD Teams site – you can access files [here](#).*

#### Attendees

ESC Members: Allan Strong (Chair), Bryan Pfeiffer (now a fauna representative), Paul Wieczoreck, Mark Scott (VFWD Commissioner’s designee), Matt Peters (flora representative), Carla Fenner (flora representative), Stephanie Smith (Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets representative)

Non-members: Jim Andrews (Reptile and Amphibian SAG), Bill Kilpatrick (Mammal SAG), Jon Kart (VFWD Permit Administrator and WAP Coordinator), Roz Renfrew (VFWD Wildlife Diversity Manager), Dorothy Allard, Savannah Ferreira (FPR Forest Health Specialist), Aaron Marcus (VFWD assistant botanist), Rich Langdon (Fish SAG).

#### Scheduled ESC Meetings for 2023

Thursday January 12<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday, April 25

Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>

All meetings 9am – 2pm, hybrid. National Life Davis Building in Montpelier, Catamount Conference Room. Roz Renfrew will reserve the room.

#### Call to Order

Allan Strong opened the hybrid in-person/online Microsoft Teams meeting at 9:03 AM. Roz Renfrew started recording at 9:03.

#### Comments from the public not related to the agenda

None.

#### Additions, deletions, or changes to the agenda

Moved the order of a couple of agenda items.

#### Approval of [minutes from the 14 April 2022 meeting](#)

**MOTION:** *By Mark Scott, seconded by Paul Wieczoreck, to approve the 14 April 2022 minutes. Motion approved. Motion passes with Stephanie Smith and Bryan Pfeiffer abstaining.*

#### Set meeting dates for the upcoming year

January 12<sup>th</sup>; April 25; September 12<sup>th</sup>

### **Introducing new ESC members**

- Matt Peters - botanist, flora rep. He will also continue to serve as Flora SAG chair.
- Carla Fenner - botanist, flora rep
- Stephanie Smith - Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets

### **Resignation of Alan Calfee**

Deep appreciation expressed by several members for Alan's contributions over many years. His term ends in Feb 2023, but we can start process to fill his position if we have a formal resignation letter. Mark welcomes any recommendations, this may be a better time of year to for the nomination and decision process compared to February when the legislature is in session. A few names were suggested and Mark Scott will follow up.

### **Updates from VT Fish and Wildlife Department – Mark Scott**

Looking for furbearer project leader, waterfowl manager hired but then had to leave, difficulty with housing, so we have reopened the search. \$2.7 million bump in PR funds. Teleworking policy enacted. Roz Renfrew and Mark Scott explained RAWA implications, planning. SAGs as match. Allan Strong suggests an online survey to partners for input.

### **Subcommittee and SAG membership**

- Vacancies on the Conservation and Education subcommittee
- Representation on Fish, and Reptile / Amphibian (herp) SAGs

Subcommittees: Permitting, Listing, Conservation & education (e.g. Laughlin award, no members currently given recent retirements).

New coop unit fish biologist may be able to advise or serve on fish.

Mammals: Paul

Flora: Matt

Birds: Allan

Fish: Allan for now until we have a replacement for Alan Calfee

Herps: Carla, given her wetlands expertise

Conservation and Ed subcommittee: Allan will track tasks

Listing subcommittee: Allan leaving, Matt will lead

Permitting subcommittee: Carla, Bryan, Allan advisory

### **Discussion of new SAGs ([Bryophytes](#) and Fungi)**

Fungi: Separate SAG versus sub-group within Flora. Dorothy has been active, we have listed bryophytes. Savanna Ferreira presented fungi proposal. Emphasis on creating baseline, not listing. Statutes refer to “plants and animals” Where do fungi fit? More like animals than plants. Statute states that fungi are included as plants. Can RAWA funds be applied towards fungi? Do insect pathogens still fall under plants?

In addition to VFWD staff capacity, Flora SAG is at/beyond capacity, Matt Peters doesn't feel they can add more by having these as subcommittees. A lot of support for having them as separate SAGs, they don't think this will create more work for VFWD staff. Dorothy can serve as liaison for VFWD on Bryophytes to keep Department updated. Savannah Ferreira can fulfill this role for Fungi.

Mark Scott: can the work happen without it formalized as a SAG? Allan: it's the least we could offer to these volunteers to have an official group on their resume. Much discussion ensued about how to move forward in terms of being separate or part of Flora. Recognition and wish to take advantage of the energy and interest.

**MOTION:** *By Allan Strong, seconded by Paul Wieczorek, to establish a bryophyte SAG and a fungi SAG. Mark Scott cannot vote given he represents the Commissioner and has not conferred with him. Stephanie Smith also needs to confer with Secretary of Agriculture. Electronic vote will be held sometime before the next ESC meeting.*

Break

**Planning for the Sally Laughlin Award presentation** (12:00, 10/1/2022, Dead Creek WMA)

Roz has started conversation with VFWD Outreach to generate media interest.

[Protection for non-game, non-avian species](#) (Jim Andrews)

[Pond Slider – a new non-native species in Vermont](#) (Jim Andrews)

Reptile and Amphibian SAG recommendation to ESC

[Invasive species worksheet](#)

Options for minimizing effects of non-native/nuisance species

Has the discussion in Fish & Wildlife Department moved forward? No. New Colonel, new Commissioner. What is the easiest first step, of the options laid out in the document? Allan Strong will reach out to Catherine Gjessing (VFWD) with Jim's letter summarizing the concerns, to learn what it will look like legally/legislatively to add all subspecies of Pond Sliders to the Fish & Wildlife Department's Restricted Species List so that a permit is required for sale or importation. Are there other species to add? Jon will ask Importation Team. Also importation of salamanders a concern due to chitrid.

Carla Fenner asks about impact in 250/248 permitting if all are protected. Usually some impact allowed.

General education/outreach: example of bat - it's been very successful.

Invasive plants: Stephanie has begun a process to get species lists out of the ruling to make it less onerous to add and remove species. Go through APA process, not the rulemaking legislature process. Aquatic Nuisance List might involve this same process. Ag has applied for funds to do more preventative work.

How often do the turtles come from online sales? Ag can regulate those. VFWD can't regulate pet trade. Pet stores: Agency regulates pet stores so they have the list but the charge/focus is around humane treatment, not environmental/wildlife impacts.

### **Updates on permit discussions**

From April meeting. There were two permit applications that were of interest for additional information (Jon Kart)

[Sheppard Colchester. Propose taking of 46 individuals of Houghton's flatsedge \(\*Cyperus houghtonii\*\)](#) to facilitate construction of a 28-unit housing development. This was discussed at the Jan 2022 meeting prior to getting input from Flora Advisory Group.

[Merrick Mt Horrid, Rochester.](#) Amateur plant breeder proposes to collect seeds from roseroot (*Sedum rosea*) to germinate and grow them to determine whether they can be grown commercially as a medicinal source. This application warranted further discussion. Flora members requested more information. Decided that rather than collect seed, authorize NPT to release seed to him or give him plants rather than collecting. Permit condition to re-enter discussion down the road to discuss related research and implications? He could partner with academic institution (UVM Extension?) and/or federal partner.

Meeting adjourned at 2:23pm.

### **Tasks before next ESC meeting**

Roz will reserve Catamount room for 2023 meetings, in communication with Sarah Hadden.

Add slider to VFWD list, with Commissioner's approval. Allan Strong will reach out to Catherine Gjessing (VFWD) about legal/legislative process/implications. Jon Kart will ask Importation Team about other species that we may want to add.

Jim will share with Mark and Roz relevant slider outreach materials to use with the Department's outreach team.

Electronic vote on fungi and Bryophyte SAGs.

Mark Scott will pursue candidates for ESC representing Agriculture/Silviculture.

*Minutes notetaking: Rosalind Renfrew, VFWD*