

**Fish and Wildlife Board  
Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, April 24, 2019**

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held a meeting beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 24, 2019 at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05620, in the Dewey Building.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Tim Biebel (Board Chair), Brian Bailey, Cheryl Frank Sullivan, Wendy Butler, Michael Bancroft, Johanna Laggis, Bryan McCarthy, David Fielding, Dennis Mewes, Bill Pickens, Jay Sweeny, Michael Kolsun, and David Robillard.

**Department Staff in Attendance:** Louis Porter (Commissioner), Mark Scott (Wildlife Director), Col. Jason Batchelder (Law Enforcement Director), Susan Warner (Outreach Director), Tom Jones (Fisheries Biologist), Adam Miller (Fish Culture Operations Manager), Will Duane (Executive Assistant), Scott Darling (Wildlife Management Manager), Nick Fortin (Deer Project Leader), and Chad Barrett (Game Warden).

**Members of the Public in Attendance:** Molly Cook, Mike Covey

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The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by the Chair

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**1) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 meeting were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

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**2) Public Comments (Limited to 2 minutes per speaker)**

None of the members of the public in attendance wished to address the Board.

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**3) Fish and Baitfish Rule Changes - Final (third) Board Vote**

Adam Miller presented to the Board on the fish and baitfish regulatory process thus

far, and the revisions suggested by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. Those suggested revisions included minor technical revisions to the rule language and some capitalization suggestions. No substantive changes were made between the second Board vote and the vote held at this meeting. Miller noted to the Board that the Department recommends that rules become effective on January 1, 2020 to allow the Department enough time for outreach and administrative work related to the rule changes.

**Motion:** Tim Biebel moved to approve the fish and baitfish rule changes as amended by the Department. Mike Bancroft Seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Unanimous roll call vote to approve the Fish and Baitfish regulations as presented.

The Fish and Baitfish regulations as approved by the Board are available on the Board section of the Department website.

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#### **4) 2019 Moose Hunting Season Permit Recommendation - Board Procedural Vote**

Mark Scott introduced Scott Darling who summarized the public comments received at the public hearings. Wildlife staff compiled the comments received at the public hearings and via the Department's public comment email address. The majority of the comments agreed with the recommendation and supported not holding a moose hunt in 2019.

Commissioner Porter added that he working to advance statutory changes in the Legislature that would give the Department and the Board better tools to control the allocation of permits issued to military veterans, auction bidders, and special opportunity hunters.

**Motion:** Brian Bailey moved to approve the Department's recommendation that no moose hunting permits be issued for the 2019 moose season. Bill Pickens seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The Board voted to approve the Department's recommendation of no moose permits for the 2019 hunting season by a unanimous roll call vote.

The 2019 moose hunting proposal is available on the Board Section of the Department website.

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### **5) Recommendations for 2019 Antlerless Deer Hunting Muzzleloader Permits**

Mark Scott explained to the Board the annual procedural requirement for antlerless archery deer hunting, youth hunting season, and muzzleloader season antlerless permit numbers in each WMU. Scott Darling and Nick Fortin presented the Department's proposals for archery and youth seasons and muzzleloader antlerless permits for the 2019 deer hunting season. The Board reviewed the proposed permit numbers in each WMU and discussed the reasons for the Department's proposal. One change was made to modify the antlerless permits in WMU D1 from 700 to 500.

The Board gave its preliminary approval to the permit numbers for the 2019 seasons. After the public comment period has ended the Department will present a final recommendation to the Board for its approval.

The approved recommendation and the Department's original proposal are available on the Board section of the Department website.

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### **6) Commissioner's Update**

There was a second rabid coyote attack in Addison County. This is a very unusual occurrence and even stranger to have two so close together. The Vermont Health Department and USDA Wildlife Services were very cooperative and helped to test the animals for rabies quickly. Both cases were confirmed to be the raccoon variant of rabies. It is still possible that the coyotes got rabies from skunks as skunks can carry the raccoon variant of rabies. Both coyotes were adults.

Two public hearings on deer are scheduled for the next two months. The first is in Bethel at White River Valley Middle School on Tuesday, May 21, which will cover the antlerless and muzzleloader permits as well as the deer rule proposals, and minor changes to turkey, bear, and moose rules. The second is on Tuesday, June 4, at Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg and will cover the proposed rules only. Both meetings begin at 6:30.

The furbearer rule on trapping in defense of property for compensation is headed to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules and is on their May 9<sup>th</sup> agenda. The Department has sent a letter to LCAR regarding the use of cable restraints for trapping in defense of property. The Department's view is that these devices can still

be permitted for use through a special permit issued by the Commissioner.

Of the 30 moose who were radio-collared this year 8 have died, a 27% mortality. Maine has also recorded a 29% mortality of their calves in their northern study area, and 46% in the western area (which has higher tick levels. 11 out of 15 calves collared in Vermont in 2018 died due to tick related illness.

The Department is having its annual card room presentation at the Statehouse in Montpelier on May 9<sup>th</sup>. This year the Department will also be hosting a game-supper potluck in evening on that same date.

Fish stocking is underway, the delayed start to spring has made it tough to keep on schedule this year. Walleye for stocking in 2020 are now spawning. The Department is using fish from the Missisquoi river for spawning this year.

Nuisance bears are being reported statewide at a high level. Some bears have killed livestock and toppled beehives. Some bear cubs are being reported as abandoned.

Several Department staff attended Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. John Austin received the William T. Hesselton award at this year's conference. This is the major wildlife award handed out annually at NEAFWA. Mark Scott was also selected to be the chair of the Northeast Wildlife Administrators Association.

The next Fish and Wildlife Board Meeting is May 22.

Green Mountain Conservation Camp registration is underway, though registration seems to be off to a slower start this year. Gun handling during the firearm safety portion of the camp may be making some parents uneasy. Please reach out to those you know for recruitment.

Salisbury Fish Culture Station money is in the current budget bill at the Legislature. Construction is underway to rebuild the Roxbury Fish Culture Station.

Hunter Education is hosting its first adult-focused hunter education for adults who come into hunting later in life on the weekend of May 24-26.

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The Meeting was Adjourned by the Chair at 7:17 PM

*The mission of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.*