

**Vermont Endangered Species Committee (ESC)
12-4-2020 Meeting Minutes**

Attendees:

ANR Secretary: Julie Moore

ESC Members: Allan Strong (Chair), Liz Thompson (Vice Chair), Bryan Pfeiffer, Paul Wieczorek, Jim Shallow, Alan Calfee, Louis Porter (Commissioner of Fish & Wildlife (FWD)), Mark Scott (FWD Commissioner's designee), Danielle Fitzko (filling in for Becca Washburn as FPR Commissioner's designee)

Non-members: Mark LaBarr and Margaret Fowle (Bird SAG and Audubon Vermont), Penny Percival (ANR Executive Assistant), Steve Parren (FWD Wildlife Diversity Manager)

Scheduled ESC Meetings for 2021:

9:00 AM – 2 PM (online)

14 January 2021

22 April 2021

16 September 2021

Call to Order:

Allan Strong opened the online Microsoft Teams meeting at 8:03AM. Thanks to Penny Percival for setting up the online meeting.

Jim Shallow thanked Liz Thompson, Alan Calfee, Commissioner Porter, and Mark Scott for making the Sally Laughlin Award for the Conservation of Endangered and Threatened Species to Warren King happen. Liz also thanked Secretary Moore.

Comments from the public not related to the agenda:

None

Proposal to delist the Bald Eagle:

Allan Strong shared delisting objectives from Recovery Plan on screen. Mark LaBarr thanked Margaret Fowle and John Buck for putting together the documentation. Margaret Fowle stated that she had updated the nesting information since the Bald Eagle had been recommended for downlisting. In 2020 a record number of Bald Eagle pairs and fledglings were documented. Criteria for delisting have been met for several years.

Commissioner Porter asked if given the small Bald Eagle population in Vermont, are there concerns about short-term impacts that could bump the species back below the delisting threshold? Margaret said it is possible to lose nests due to a weather events, but the longer term trend has been positive. These same concerns were considered when the Common Loon, Peregrine Falcon, and Ospreys were delisted, and history has taught us that the increasing trends are likely to persist. The ESC encouraged a post-delisting management plan similar to those for other delisted birds. Liz Thompson asked what were the weather events that could impact Bald Eagle nesting? Margaret explained that late spring snow and wind can impact nests, but that this was unlikely to be statewide. Jim Shallow asked how our trend compares

to other states? Margaret mentioned that New Hampshire has also had a steady increase. Maine now has several hundred pairs. New York does not track the number of nests because they have so many. There is a large source of Bald Eagles surrounding Vermont.

Paul Wieczoreck asked if there were DDT sorts of threats that could impact Bald Eagles. Margaret responded that there are chemicals like mercury in Bald Eagles but not dire enough to impact population growth. Fire retardants are widespread in the environment, but not believed to be impacting population growth in Bald Eagles. Bryan Pfeiffer asked how the current nesting abundance compared to what may have been here in early 1900s? He stated that past ESC chair Sally Laughlin was credited with the last record of nesting Bald Eagles in Vermont before the current recovery. Margaret explained how we examined the size and number of water bodies and available habitat when setting recovery objectives because the historical record was largely missing. Mark LaBarr mentioned that Sally Laughlin is part of the Bird SAG and was part of the process recommending delisting.

Liz Thompson asked how we ensure there is follow up with a post-delisting plan. Allan Strong stated that he did not know the process but these has been done before. Mark LaBarr responded that Bird SAG could discuss and perhaps recommend a post-delisting plan to the ESC. Allan Strong pointed out that relisting criteria are included in the recovery plan. Mark Scott addressed the ESC stating that the FWD intends to continue monitoring and management of Bald Eagles. Steve Parren stated that he will discuss drafting a post-delisting plan with our Bird Project Leader Doug Morin. Mark Scott shared that there can be emergency listings should the need arise. Paul Wieczoreck stated we should acknowledge the good work all staff and partners have done working together to recover this species. Liz Thompson stated that she assumed the FWD would do a press release when a delisting occurs.

MOTION: *By Alan Calfee, seconded by Paul Wieczoreck, to recommend delisting of the Bald Eagle with follow up monitoring.*

The vote was in favor of the motion. Voting for the motion were Allan Strong, Liz Thompson, Bryan Pfeiffer, Paul Wieczoreck, Jim Shallow, and Alan Calfee. There were no votes against the motion. Commissioner Porter and FPR designee Danielle Fitzko abstained as members of the ANR.

Commissioner Porter thanked everyone for the successful recovery of the Bald Eagle in Vermont. Mark Labarr once again thanked Margaret Fowle and John Buck and for putting together the documentation.

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 AM

Respectfully submitted: 12/4/2020

Steve Parren
Fish & Wildlife Department

Approved: 1/14/2021

Allan Strong, Chair Endangered Species Committee