

Meeting of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board

Meeting Minutes from Wednesday, May 23, 2018

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board held a meeting beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 23, 2018 at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05620 in the Dewey Building.

Members of the Board in Attendance: Kevin Lawrence (Board Chair), Theresa Elmer (Vice Chair), Dennis Mewes, David Fielding Jr., Johanna Laggis, Brian Wiles, Bill Pickens, Craig Greene, Pete Allard, Cheryl Frank Sullivan, Mike Kolsun, and David Robillard.

Fish and Wildlife Department Staff: Louis Porter (Commissioner), Mark Scott (Wildlife Division Director), Eric Palmer (Fisheries Division Director), Catherine Gjessing (General Counsel), Colonel Jason Batchelder (Chief Warden), Will Duane (Executive Assistant), Adam Miller (Fish Culture Operations Manager), Tom Rogers (Outreach Specialist), and Annie Barkan (Outreach Division Intern).

Member(s) of the Public in Attendance: Dave Aronson (Native Fish Coalition)

Meeting Agenda:

1. Approval of April 25, 2018 Meeting Minutes
2. Public Comments
3. Received Petition Consideration
4. 2018 Antlerless Deer Permits and Youth Season—Final Vote
5. Commissioner's Update
6. Roundtable Discussion

The Board Meeting was called to order at 5:04 PM, EST by Board Chair Kevin Lawrence

1. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from the April 25, 2018 Board Meeting

Motion: Vice Chair Theresa Elmer moved that the minutes of the April 25, 2018, Board Meeting be approved as drafted. Board Member David Robillard seconded the motion.

Vote: 12-0 in favor of approving the minutes (unanimous voice vote)

2. Public Comments

Dave Aronson—Vermont Chair of the Native Fish Coalition.

The Native Fish Coalition would like to the Board to reduce the brook trout creel limit in Vermont. NFC recommends that the total creel limit stay at 12 but limit the total for brook,

brown, and rainbow trout to 6 each (brown and rainbow are currently limited to 6 each). NFC has reviewed the Rich Kirn survey results from last fall and would like to give a formal presentation to the Board at a later date. There are streams in the NEK that have lost their brook trout completely, NFC would like to see the Board revisit this issue.

3. Received Petition Consideration

Vermont Wildlife Coalition—Prior to the Board meeting on April 25th, 2018, but after the agenda for that meeting was finalized and distributed, the Department and the Board received a petition from the Vermont Wildlife Coalition regarding the proposed 2018 moose hunt. The petition and its associated signatures were received on Monday, April 23rd, and were distributed to Department staff and Board Members that day. The petition requested that the Board not issue any moose hunting permits during the 2018 season. The Board's procedure for determining if any permits should be issued for 2018 was underway when the petition was received. As such, the petition from VWC was distributed to the Board and the Department with all other public comments on that issue.

Motion: Board Chair Kevin Lawrence motioned that the Board confirm that the petition received by the Vermont Wildlife Coalition was included in the Board's deliberations for the 2018 moose hunt permitting procedure. Board Vice Chair Theresa Elmer seconded the motion.

Vote: 12-0 in favor of approving the minutes (unanimous voice vote).

Turkey Hunt Amendments—The Board received a request for a modification of its turkey hunting rule from Brett Ladue. The petitioner requested an expansion of the size of shot that can be used while hunting turkey in Vermont. Additionally, the petitioner asked for clarification if using a .410 shotgun was acceptable for turkey hunting in Vermont.

Wildlife Director Mark Scott recommended to the Board that it deny this petition because the subject matter will be covered in the Department's 10-year big game management plan, which is currently under review. After the big game plan is completed the portions that require Board action will be presented to the Board. The timeline for the completion of the plan is likely to be winter of 2019-2020. There will be opportunity for comment on season and various hunting implements when the individual species-specific sections of the big game plan are before the Board.

Colonel Jason Batchelder confirmed that the use of a .410 shotgun is legal in Vermont.

Motion: Board member Craig Green motioned that the Board decline to take up rule-making to amend the Board's Turkey Rule in this instance. Board Member Bill Pickens seconded the motion.

Vote: 12-0 in favor of denying the request.

The Department will write a response to this petitioner to provide the Board's decision and reasoning.

4. 2018 Antlerless Deer Permits and Youth Season—Final Vote

Commissioner Porter introduced Wildlife Director Mark Scott to begin the discussion and final vote on the 2018 antlerless deer hunting seasons. Joining the meeting via phone were Wildlife Management Program Manager, Scott Darling, and Deer Project Leader, Nick Fortin. Department Staff and Board Members discussed public input collected biological data from previous hunting seasons, the Department's scientific modeling, WMU densities, fawn birthrates, habitat and food security, WMU-specific geography, permit number history, antler beam densities trends, predictions for winter severity, and hunting success rates.

Motion: Member David Robillard motioned to adjust the permit allocation in the Department's proposal in WMU D1 from 1,200 permits issued to 1,000 permits for the 2018 antlerless muzzleloader deer hunting season. The motion was seconded by Member Johanna Laggis.

Vote: The board voted 9-3 against modifying the proposal for WMU D1 as proposed.

Members Voting in Favor of Modification: Johanna Laggis, Mike Kolsun, and David Robillard.

Members Voting Against Modification: Kevin Lawrence, Theresa Elmer, Dennis Mewes, David Fielding Jr., Brian Wiles, Bill Pickens, Craig Greene, Pete Allard, and Cheryl Frank Sullivan.

Motion: Board Member Craig Greene motioned that the Board approve the 2018 antlerless deer for archery, muzzleloader antlerless permits by WMU (attached), and youth hunting seasons (either sex) as proposed by the Department. Board Vice Chair Theresa Elmer seconded the motion.

Vote: 12-0 in favor of approving the 2018 antlerless deer, muzzleloader, and youth hunting seasons as proposed by the Department.

5. Commissioner's Update

- A few days still remain in Vermont's spring turkey hunting season. The Commissioner has shot at, and missed one turkey.
- Fish stocking in the State's rivers has been delayed this year due to the late-season winter weather that kept the waters cold in March. Stocking is underway now.
- Game Warden Mike Scott was honored with the State's Warden of the Year award at the statehouse earlier in the day. His family attended the ceremony as well.

- The Department is getting closer to finalizing a deal with a vendor for its website. The Department's website should be back up to full strength in July.
- Antlerless permit applications will be going up on the website tomorrow. These are available only online.
- The agendas for upcoming Board meetings are light. The Department will propose a training for all Members this summer and send out a Doodle Poll to determine best date.
- The Department and the Department of Forests Parks and Recreation held a joint conservations summit on land conservation with other outside stakeholders. The summit was well-attended.
- Next month there will be a community meeting to address the issue of high deer numbers in the City of Montpelier.
- The Department has a new WMA: Windsor Grasslands. There will be an opening ceremony on June 7th at the WMA. A press release has been sent. Department will send out information to Board.
- Vermont Bearhoundsmen Association has their annual upcoming barbeque on July 10 at Barre Fish and Game Clubhouse. Information for Board Members will be distributed.
- Two longtime Department staff members are retiring at the end of the week. Doug Blodgett and Rich Kirn have been key to the Department's work for the last decades. They will be greatly missed.
- This is Craig Greene's last Board meeting. Craig will be sorely missed; the Department will send updates to the Board on his replacement.
- As mentioned earlier, the Department is preparing its 10-year big game plan. There is a stakeholder meeting for sporting organizations to identify issues on May 30. A non-consumptive stakeholder meeting is being planned on June 13 as well.
- Sturgeon are being caught on the Winooski River. This is a great sign for the recovery of the species, and it is not illegal to incidentally catch a sturgeon. However, we do think it's likely that some people are trying to catch them on purpose. This is a tough enforcement issue.

6. Board Member Roundtable Discussion

Motion: Vice Chair Theresa Elmer motioned to adjourn the meeting. Member Dennis Mewes seconded the motion.

Vote: The Board voted unanimously to adjourn.

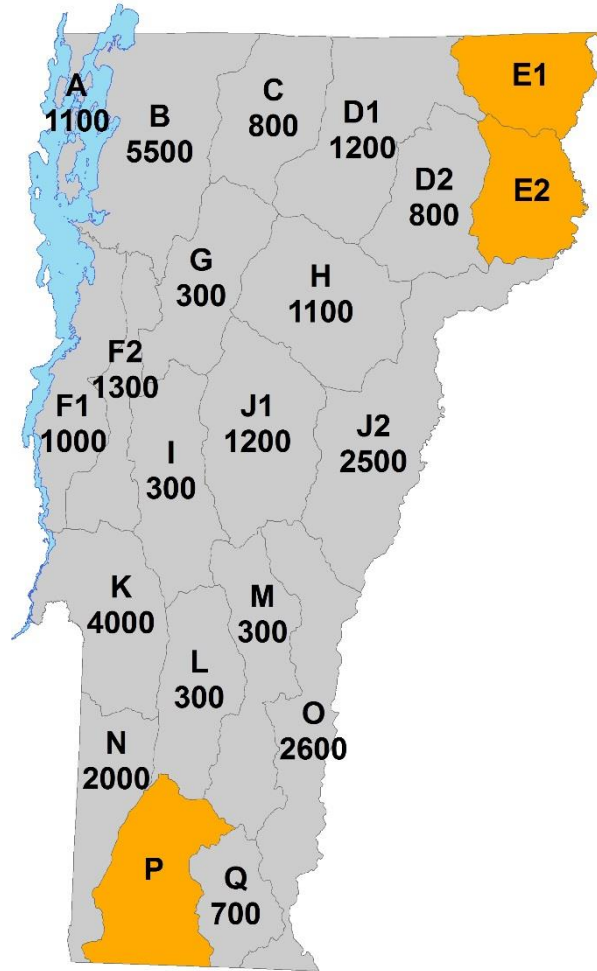
The Board meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 6:25 pm.

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

ATTACHMENT 1 - 2018 ANTLERLESS DEER HUNTING PERMITS ALLOCATED PER WMU

2018

WMU	2018
A	1100
B	5500
C	800
D1 ^a	1200
D2 ^a	800
E ^a	0
F1	1000
F2	1300
G	300
H ^b	1100
I	300
J1	1200
J2 ^c	2500
K ^d	4000
L	300
M ^e	300
N	2000
O ^f	2600
P	0
Q ^a	700



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