



STATE OF NEW YORK CONSERVATION FUND ADVISORY BOARD  
*625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4750*

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Monthly Meeting Minutes  
Two Hundred Eighty-Seventh Meeting  
12 January 2009

Dept of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY

**Call to Order** – Chairman Hancock called the meeting to order at 9:22 AM.

**Roll Call**

Voting Board Members Present

Charles Bevilacqua	Region 1
Gordon Whiting	Region 2
Dominick Scarzafava	Region 3
Alan Rosa	Region 4
Jason Kemper	Region 5
Linda Sicley	Region 6
Charles Pace	Region 7
Charles Hancock	Region 8
Dale Dunkelberger	Region 9
Howard Cushing	NYSCC
Gerald Bierker	FWMB

DEC Personnel

Douglas Stang, John Major, Steve Hurst and  
Arthur J. Newell, Division of Fish,  
Wildlife and Marine Resources  
Scott Abrahamson, Office of General Counsel

Ex-Officio Members Present

NYS DEC Commissioner, represented by  
Assistant Commissioner Christopher  
Amato; Patricia Riexinger, Director,  
Division of Fish, Wildlife and  
Marine Resources; and  
Wallace John, Office of Natural  
Resources

Guest

Harold Palmer, NYSCC  
Jim Petreszyn, FWMB  
Patricia Arnold, FWMB  
Steve Piatt, Outdoor News

Ex-Officio Members Absent

Senate Finance Committee  
Senate EnCon Committee  
Assembly EnCon Committee  
Assembly Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Hancock stated that a quorum of voting members was present and opened the meeting for the conduct of business.

**Correspondence:**

Mr. Kemper sent a letter to Governor Paterson on 10 December 2008, as Secretary of the Board, opposing the closure of the Reynolds Game Farm. The letter is appended to the minutes.

Chairman Hancock received a letter from the Venison Donation Coalition, dated 8 January 2009, thanking the Board and all sportsmen for their support of the venison donation program and asking the Board to support the addition of a \$0.5-\$1 fee to each big game license that would be used to support the venison donation program. The letter is appended to the minutes. [Note: letter received only in paper form; it will not accompany any electronic versions of these minutes.]

Chairman Hancock said that he has received e-mails from a number of sports people, complaining about the untimeliness of information about the Board, e.g., member info and committees. The Chairman reinforced their concern that Board matters need to be put on the web page in a timely manner. Members were asked to provide updated material for their bios.

Chairman Hancock received an e-mail from Harold Palmer, President of the NYSCC, dated 4 January 2009, which had been sent to many NYS sportsmen. The letter supported 1) reasonable license fee increases, 2) a trout and salmon stamp, 3) a pheasant stamp dedicated to raising and stocking pheasants, 4) a new marine recreational fishing license, with \$6 to go into CF and the remainder to go into the Marine Account and 5) the bottle bill, adding a 5-cent deposit on non-carbonated beverages and all unclaimed funds to go into the EPF. The e-mail is appended to the minutes.

8 Dec 08 minutes were reviewed, and then

**Mr. Rosa made a motion to accept the minutes of the 8 Dec 08 meeting as presented, with one change; seconded by Mr. Scarzafava and passed unanimously.**

## **Committee Reports**

### Legislation

Mr. Cushing distributed a list of pre-filed bills.

Mr. Cushing expressed concern about budget actions to sweep capital funds allocated to DFWMR, with special concern about EPF which the Legislature allocates. Mr. Stang said that the funding for the Imperial Dam on the Saranac River was from the Clean Water/ Clean Air Bond Act and as such, the project and allocation were specifically identified by legislation.

Although it was decided that fee bills would be discussed later in the meeting, there was at this time a discussion of information the Board needed, starting with money needed to repair the hatcheries. Mr. Hurst said that progress was made over the past few years, with a slow down this year, in particular, at the Rome hatchery. There was discussion on the amount of money needed to restore the hatchery system. Mr. Cushing said it seems that about \$16-17 million is needed, and the story needs to be told about what is getting done. However, Chairman Hancock said, the perception by sports people is that not much is getting done. The Chairman asked DFWMR to update the 2003 report on the status of the hatcheries and the estimate of money needed to restore them; Director Riexinger said DFWMR would do that. Mr. Cushing asked DFWMR to find out how many additional fishing licenses would have to be sold to receive the maximum 5% apportionment of Sport Fish Restoration money. (Note: after the

meeting DFWMR staff provided information to the Board: in order to receive the 5% maximum NY would need more than an additional 1.6 million license buyers; however, even if NYS does not attain the maximum apportionment, based on FFY information recently obtained from the Region 5 USFWS

office in Hadley, MA, every additional license buyer would bring an additional \$7 of Sport Fish Restoration funds, based on the FFY 08 SFR apportionment.)

The discussion returned to capital funds. Mr. Stang said that the 2002 state capital for the hatcheries will not be reappropriated and that DEC has a cash ceiling that has almost been reached this FY, which affects DFWMR being able to spend its capital. Mr. Palmer asked how much capital is need for the hatcheries in 2009, and Mr. Stang said about \$2.8 million for Rome. Mr. Kemper asked how much FY 07-08 capital was spent; Mr. Hurst said none, and Mr. Stang added that none of the FY 05-06 capital was spent either and the DEC state capital cap next year will probably be about \$14 million. Mr. Cushing said that Belleayre loses money every year, so none of DEC's capital should be spent on it.

Mr. Bierker asked about bill # A1636; does anyone know if this bill would provide a free license to NYS residents in the military and who are stationed in NYS? He said that it appears to provide a free license only to non-NYS residents stationed in NYS, and if that is the case, then it should be corrected. No one at the meeting could offer a better opinion than Mr. Bierker's interpretation.

## **New Business**

### Small Game – Pheasant Program

Mr. Cushing reported that the Rensselaer County Sportsmen Federation will seek an injunction against the State to stall the closure of the Reynolds game farm, so time can be had to pursue options to keep it open. Chairman Hancock said that it is very disturbing that the State is taking this unilateral action; CFAB should have been informed; there are questions about the legality of certain plans to dispose of the pheasants, and the Board asked DEC for a legal opinion on this point. Mr. Abrahamson, an attorney in DEC Division of Legal Affairs, said that DEC does not have its own legal authority to dispose of personal property, which is what the pheasants are; DEC asked the Office of General Services for approval to dispose of the birds according to certain plans, and OGS gave such approval, making the determination that the birds were surplus property.

Chairman Hancock asked if the Governor's direction on this matter was legal. Mr. Amato said this was probably not an appropriate matter for discussion between DEC and the Board; regardless, DEC is bound by the Governor's decision. Chairman Hancock said that CFAB is under the Legislature's purview. Mr. Pace asked if DEC proposed closure of the game farm. Mr. Amato said that DEC was asked by Division of Budget to provide a broad array of cost savings options, and closing the game farm was on of them. Mr. Amato added that this option has been discussed at two prior meetings with CFAB representatives and other members of hunting, fishing and trapping organizations; DEC is receiving huge cuts in its budget, greatly affecting many programs besides DFWMR and some are being zeroed out. Mr. Pace asked if Mr. Amato saw a written Executive Order, and Mr. Amato said he had not seen one. Mr. Palmer said he was at two meetings with the Commissioner at which the pheasant farm was discussed, but not its closure; and he further asked if the loss of revenue was considered if there was no more pheasant hunting, in his opinion the additional pheasant hunters brought in more revenue than the cost of operating the game farm. Mr. Amato said that DEC may secure pheasants from another source for stocking in NY, but may not have the money to do that this coming year. Mr. Palmer said that  
Judith

Enck told him that there would be no more stocking of birds in NYS. Mr. Amato said that only referred to FY 09-10, and there may be stocking in the future. It was asked by several why people/groups who were going to receive the birds would not be charged and what was the basis for OGS' decision. . Mr. Abrahamson said that OGS has discretion to decide how surplus personal property of the State is disposed of and OGS granted DEC's decision not to charge for the birds. DEC will consider using

funds from another source (possibly the General Fund) to reimburse the CF for the value of the birds. Mr. Pace asked why CFAB was not consulted on this decision, said that this sort of action comes under Board oversight and that this action indicates that the State does not respect this oversight role. Mr. Rosa said that the Board should see the OGS document approving the disposal of the pheasants.

**Mr. Cushing made a motion that DEC should provide to the Board the protocol or consent order issued by the office of General Services, authorizing DEC to dispose of the pheasants at the Reynolds Game Farm according to the plan submitted by DEC; seconded by Mr. Dunkelberger and passed unanimously.**

(Note: after the lunch break Mr. Stang delivered to the Board the documents referenced in the motion above, including the e-mails between DEC and OGS requesting determination of the pheasants as surplus property and providing the determination that the pheasants were surplus and could be disposed of according to the request – distribution to cooperators, game bird breeders and food processors.)

Discussion on this matter continued for some time. Comments, questions, etc. are summarized below. Mr. Scarzafava: how can the State do this when it is paid with CF?

Mr. Dunkelberger: there was no consideration in the decision to close the farm for the benefits to 4H and other youth groups that receive 60,000 pheasant chicks annually; sports people will not accept this, many will stop buying licenses.

Mr. Amato: DEC does not necessarily disagree with CFAB; DEC is simply faced with major cuts in programs' funding.

Mr. Bevilacqua: are there any other DEC programs that have funds dedicated to a DEC program that come from fees paid by the public?

Mr. Rosa: what will happen to the real property? Mr. Amato responded that there has been no decision on this yet.

Chairman Hancock: what could be legally done with the real property? Mr. Abrahamson said that the State would have to determine if any federal funds were used to acquire the land or make improvements and bill language on the acquisition would have to be examined. Mr. Stang said a cursory look at the records indicated that that no PR/Wildlife Restoration federal funds were used on the property.

Mr. Amato: reiterated that the Commissioner did tell sports groups months ago that closure of the game farm was a possibility and that this shouldn't be a surprise to the Board or others.

Chairman Hancock: DEC did not say it might happen this year, possibly next year.

Mr. Bevilacqua: DEC is a greedy consumer of sportsmen's money.

Mr. Amato: not accurate; DEC spends hundreds of millions on acquisition of land and other programs that benefits hunters, anglers and trappers.

Mr. Bevilacqua: yes, but sports people also pay taxes that generate those funds.

Ms. Arnold: pheasants have been very important to youth hunts, which develop new license buyers, and perhaps pheasants for stocking can be bought cheaper, but there is value to have pheasants raised in NY for young people to experience the whole life cycle.

Mr. Petreszyn: asked for information and input on the disposal of the land; at the least it should be kept as open space.

Mr. Palmer: Judith Enck told him the land would be sold and that she was unaware of the value of pheasant hunting; he further said this will reduce recruitment of young hunters.

Mr. Palmer: what is the State's response to sports people on the Quiet Waters issue.

Mr. Amato said that he was surprised at the lack of input from the public, sports groups in particular, on the float plan ban on Lows Lake and that there has yet to be a proposal to ban motor boats on any water.

Mr. Kemper: the ban of float planes on Lows Lake is not a big issue for hunters and anglers; he has sent many e-mails and letters to DEC since August on the Quiet Waters initiative, and he has not received one response. Mr. Amato said none got to him or he would have replied.

Mr. Palmer: DEC should have defended the pheasant farm based on the revenue that pheasant hunting

generates.

Chairman Hancock after a discussion with Mr. Abrahamson: State law says that “any board” can bid on state property that is for sale after other agencies and municipalities turn it down.

Ms. Arnold: why does the closure have to happen so quickly?

Ms. Sicley: her constituents are asking her, what’s the next hunting, fishing or trapping program that will be cut; the value of hunting, fishing and trapping in NYS needs to be considered.

## **Old Business**

### Annual Report

Mr. Cushing pointed out that the recent Annual Report had different information, presented in different ways, than previous years in those sections that were drawn for DEC’s Level of Effort Report, in particular, regarding the sources and expenditure of funds, and he requested that the report be revised.

Ms. Sicley noted that the report says she was not at the May 08 meeting; she was and asked if this could be changed. Mr. Stang said DFWMR will revise the report based on Board members’ recommendations on specific information to be included and presentation format(s) for the information..

Mr. Palmer said the report does not provide an adequate breakdown of costs by subprograms. He asked the Governor’s office for a more detailed breakdown of expenditures. Mr. Stang said that DFWMR did provide to the Board last summer a breakdown to 15 categories (that coincide with Strategies in the DFWMR strategic plan) of cost. There was then a discussion of what breakdown the Board would like to see so that the information can be clearly presented to other interested parties. DFWMR staff will work on the breakdown, once the categories are identified and agreed upon by the Board.

Mr. Palmer said that the NYSCC would prefer a general license fee increase instead of a trout and salmon stamp, and suggested such a general increase that would generate about \$10 million. Mr. Palmer pointed out that the three main hunting prey in NY are deer, turkey and pheasants; take away one, and hunting revenue will go way down. Mr. Palmer said that NYSCC would also support a \$10 pheasant stamp, dedicated to run the pheasant program; about 60,000 people hunt pheasants, so such a stamp could support the pheasant program. Director Riexinger asked how many current pheasant hunters would actually buy a stamp, and Mr. Palmer said he did not know. Mr. Kemper suggested only about 15,000 people would buy a pheasant stamp. Mr. Bevilacqua said he favored a general fee increase, and Mr. Palmer agreed, and added that a general fee increase combined with a marine license should provide sufficient revenue to cover all DFWMR expenses for next year. Mr. Kemper said that more than a one year fix is needed, and he would not recommend a one year fix.

## **Department Reports**

### Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources

Mr. Stang gave the report, starting with a summary of the DFWMR operating budget as it is in the Governor’s FY 09 budget proposal. DFWMR staffing will be reduced from 441 FTEs to 399; the division is already down 18 to 423. The hiring freeze will continue in FY 09; no new hires; possibly some promotions. About 250-260 DFWMR staff will be paid from CF, 41 staff from GF and 71 staff from federal funds. The reduced state funded staff will increase difficulty of making match for federal funds. Allocations of temporary service (seasonals), Holiday pay and overtime will be reduced. The allocation of CF nonpersonal service funds will be reduced about \$1.4 million. Reduced allocations for this fiscal year will result in maximum expenditures of about \$3.8 million. In the past, the Legislature has typically approved the DFWMR operating as proposed by the Governor.

Mr. Cushing asked if the ECOs will go back on the CF if there is a license fee increase, and continued saying that he wants to know about all all DEC work done by staff paid from the CF, not just DFWMR staff. Mr. Palmer said he wants staff paid from CF doing work that most serves hunting, fishing and trapping programs. Mr. Stang said that the Level of Effort Report contains the cost of work on the FWMR program by other divisions; right now, about 65% of all ECO effort is on the FWMR program; the Board will be able to see in the future if ECO effort on FWMR programs goes down.

Chairman Hancock said that Mr. Stang provided the Board a document that described options for disposing of the pheasants, and asked the Board if they had any comments. Mr. Cushing questioned the legality of the State's action; is there a document signed by the Governor, Governor's Secretary or other authorized individual to issue this order; a press release is not sufficient as a formal decision or order; if the pheasants are killed without a legitimate order, CFAB should take some action. Chairman Hancock asked the Board what they want to do. Mr. Cushing said that the Board should seek a delay of the pheasant disposal and get CFAB involved in evaluating options. There was general discussion on the matter. Mr. Rosa said that the best recommendation that CFAB could provide is that the game farm shouldn't be closed because of its value to the state economy, although he doesn't dispute the State's authority to close it. Mr. Pace questioned the value of communications since there have been no replies to any letters opposing the closure; since CF money is involved the Board should not have to ask to be heard, even if it is not a legal requirement for CFAB to be involved in the decision process. Mr. Dunkelberger posed the question, why is it happening so fast, then said, because the administration wants it done before anyone has time to object, and once the birds are gone it will be too late. Dr. Major pointed out that in 1991 the pheasant farms (then two) were slated to be closed, and the Legislature intervened to keep them open.

#### Law Enforcement

No representation by DLE because Mr. Newell forgot to send the agenda to the Director's office and notify his office of the meeting date.

#### **Other Business and Discussions**

##### License Fee Proposal

Chairman Hancock reminded the Board of its recommendation on page 23 of the 07-08 Annual Report, as a lead in to the discussion: "If sportsmen and women want to continue to contribute the same percent of revenue to fish and wildlife programs as in the past then a broad based tax such as an excise tax needs to be considered." Mr. John suggested that the Board had three options: 1) do nothing, do not support any fee increases or cost savings, which would likely result in an increase in the CF deficit, 2) support the Governor's proposals and 3) develop its own assessment of the amount of revenue needed to support current programs, then recommend changes to the Governor's proposals and/or other revenue generating ideas that would achieve the needed revenue. Mr. John added that increases could be sequenced over several years. There was then general discussion on options and factors affecting revenue and expenditures, followed by Mr. Pace saying there was a need to work with the Governor's office if the Board wanted to promote a general tax on certain outdoor gear or equipment that would be dedicated to the FWMR program, e.g., like the Missouri tax. Director Riexinger recommended that if this option was pursued, the hunting, fishing, and trapping constituencies should collaborate with other environmental groups to generate a broad consensus on the proposal. It was acknowledged that the hunting, fishing and trapping constituencies should not propose a general tax if other environmental constituencies would not be able to provide a voice in how the new revenue would be spent. Mr. Cushing suggested the CFAB draft a bill like Mr. Pace described, then look for a legislator to pick it up; but probably couldn't get done this year. Mr. Cushing added that the Board needs to take a position on the marine license proposal and develop a comprehensive FWMR

program funding plan. Chairman Hancock said that the Board is already on the record for an excise tax on outdoor gear and equipment, and asked it if would like to reaffirm the recommendation.

**Mr. Pace made a motion for the Board to reaffirm its position in the CFAB 2007-08 Annual Report regarding the increase of revenue to the CF, to wit, "If sportsmen and women want to continue to contribute the same percent of revenue to fish and wildlife programs as in the past then a broad based tax such as an excise tax needs to be considered." Ms. Sicley seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.**

Discussion continued and the Board agreed that there was a need for a fact sheet on revenue, expenditures and projections on each. Chairman Hancock asked the Board to agree that the revenue target is \$40 million more per year in five years, which the Board accepted.

The Board then addressed the marine recreational license fee proposed in the Governor's budget. Chairman Hancock said that his constituency charged him to support it. Mr. Cushing said that marine anglers will oppose the revenue going into the CF; the Board needs to support something like Pat Augustine (a leader among the marine constituency) will support. Mr. John summarized the Governor's bill and compared it with the new federal registry requirements, ending with the question, if all the marine license revenue goes into the Marine Account (MA), how will that help solve the CF deficit. Mr. Cushing suggested that \$5-6 of each marine license go to CF and the remainder to MA. Mr. Stang reminded the Board that the Governor's proposal would bring in more federal Sport Fish Restoration funds (As noted above, each new license buyer would bring would bring in an additional \$7 of SFR money.), he nevertheless acknowledged that where the new license revenue goes is the major sticking point with the marine license proposal. Mr. John pointed out that this bill was crafted to plug a \$10 million CF deficit; if any of the \$10 million is diverted, the deficit will need to be made up elsewhere. Mr. Amato said that he understands this bill would face opposition, and the Board could help in suggesting a compromise split of the new marine license revenue. The Board then discussed the matter further. Mr. Cushing asked if a letter from the Board to leaders of the Legislature, requesting that a compromise split of revenue between CF and MA be negotiated would be helpful.

**Mr. Cushing made a motion for the Board to send a letter to Governor Paterson and appropriate legislators, urging them to negotiate a compromise marine recreational fishing license that would contribute some of the revenue to the CF and the remainder to the Marine Resources Account; seconded by Mr. Dunkelberger and passed by a nine yea and two nay vote.**

Chairman Hancock said he would draft a letter and circulate it among the Board for their review.

Discussion then turned to the Trout & Salmon Stamp. Ms Sicley that she can't support the Stamp because the trout waters she fishes are not stocked and that is the case for many of her constituents. Mr. Dunkelberger said the situation is similar on the Great Lakes, where many anglers don't fish for trout or salmon, but this would require that they buy a Stamp. Mr. Pace said he would not support it; he's wary of more stamps. Chairman Hancock said his preference was for a general fee increase on licenses; he is less opposed to a \$30 fishing license than he is to a \$10 Trout & Salmon Stamp. Ms. Sicley suggested that an excise tax on certain outdoor equipment might be best, or a visible license that would boost sales. Discussion of options continued for some minutes more.

**Mr. Bierker made a motion for the Board to oppose the institution of a trout/salmon stamp; seconded by Mr. Dunkelberger and passed by a ten yea and one nay vote.**

The Board then discussed the section of the Governor's bill regarding the change in the mandate that

municipal clerks were required to sell sport licenses.

**Ms Sicley made a motion for the Board to support removal of the mandate for municipal clerks to issue hunting, fishing and trapping licenses so that DEC may offer license sales commissions to other interested parties; seconded by Mr. Scarzfava and passed unanimously.**

The Board's discussion turned to the proposal to reduce the 1-day freshwater license to \$5, to coincide with the proposed 1-day marine fee.

**Mr. Pace made a motion to oppose the reduction of the 1-day fishing license to \$5; seconded by Mr. Bierker and passed by an eight yea and three nay vote.**

Chairman Hancock asked if there was any more business to conduct. Mr. Peterszyn asked why there was not a hunting or trapping license need for some people, and Chairman Hancock said that was only for farmers.

Mr. Kemper then said that the Board should consider proposing a general license fee increase. Chairman Hancock asked if the Board would consider approving a one-time increase to address the expected \$40 million CF deficit in five years. Mr. Cushing said that it would have to be 85%, and Chairman Hancock agreed. Messrs. Stang and John then projected a table of current hunting, fishing and trapping fees, to which the Board added a number of candidate license fee increases.

The Board then passed a motion to consider the proposal during the week and send their vote on it by e-mail by 16 January. However, after the meeting the Board decided that it could not vote by e-mail, thus this motion was considered null, and the Board will consider the proposal at the 9 February meeting.

Mr. Pace asked if Board members could now talk to the public about the idea of an excise tax on outdoor equipment, and Chairman Hancock said yes.

### **Upcoming CFAB meetings**

Legislative Office Building, Room 711A, Albany: 9 Feb 09

**Meeting adjourned at 5 PM.**

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Jason Kemper, Secretary



**STATE OF NEW YORK CONSERVATION FUND ADVISORY BOARD**  
625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233

December 10, 2008

The Honorable David A. Paterson  
Governor of New York  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

At the unanimous request of the members of the Conservation Fund Advisory Board established under the New York State Environmental Conservation Law, I am writing to request reconsideration of the closing of the Richard E. Reynolds Game Farm. This decision is particularly offensive to the sportsmen/women of New York State that enjoy pheasant hunting.

The Richard E. Reynolds Game Farm contributes to the pheasant population in New York State. Pheasant hunting is a vital economic hunting driver for many rural areas of upstate New York. National economic data indicates that each hunter spends on average \$1,896.00 per year. The New York State Assembly established a Hunting and Fishing task force in 2006. That Task Force found that over 640,000 New York residents are hunters. In addition, in 2001, over \$820,000,000 was spent on hunting in New York State. The Reynolds Game Farm is an important component of maintaining and growing the sport of hunting in our state.

The closing of the Reynolds Game Farm will decrease the availability of pheasants, an important game bird both nationally and in New York State. The proposed closing will also likely result in fewer hunting licenses because of this population decrease. Hunting license fees are an important component of the budget of the NYSDEC Fish and Wildlife Division through the Conservation Fund. In addition, fewer hunting licenses will cause a substantial decrease of the current \$65,600,000 in sales tax revenue generated each year in New York State by hunters. It is our belief that the Budget Office failed to adequately account for the lost revenues that will occur when hunters become further disenchanted with the policies of New York State.

The Conservation Fund Advisory Board requests that both your office and NYSDEC seriously reconsider the decision to close the Richard E. Reynolds Game Farm. We'd welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to discuss this matter further.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Jason Kemper  
Secretary, Conservation Fund Advisory Board

cc: Andrew Cuomo, NY Attorney General  
Laura L. Anglin, NYS Division of Budget

## Appendix 2

**From:** NYSCC President Harold Palmer <nysccpresident@yahoo.com>  
**To:** nysccpresident@yahoo.com  
**Date:** 1/4/2009 6:10 PM  
**Subject:** Fw: NYSCC direction: pheasants, trout&salmon stamp, marine license

Hello all concerned sportsmen.

As everyone has heard, we are facing some major cuts in the programs and staff that DEC provides for us through the Conservation Fund. Much of the funding for the Conservation Fund comes from the fees we spend on hunting, fishing and trapping licenses, and the federal dollars that are returned from federal taxes on equipment we buy, with some money also coming from the General Fund. This year there is less money coming in from the General Fund, which is adding to the deficit in the Conservation Fund. In previous years there was talk of license fee increases, which the NYSCC opposed because of lack of support in the Legislature to lower the age to hunt big game. In 2008 this legislation passed, and now 14 and 15 years old can hunt big game.

I anticipated a proposal by DEC for license fee increases, which did not occur. Instead, the Governor's office and Budget and Finance decided to do away with the pheasant program, even though it brought in millions of dollars. Hopefully we can get money set up in a dedicated account to protect the pheasant program in future years. I have meetings set up with the hopes of saving the pheasant program for this year.

In the Governor's budget bills, there is also language to create a \$10 trout and salmon stamp that would be required of everyone who will fish waters that are listed as trout waters. This would not be so bad - IF the money went into a special account for raising and stocking trout and salmon; at least we would have a means of protecting the fish hatcheries.

The \$19 marine recreational fishing license will put New York State in compliance with federal regulations requiring a registry of all marine recreational anglers; but in the Governor's budget bill, nothing would go back to the marine district. Also, anyone fishing the Hudson River up to the Troy dam would need that marine license. Adding that to the cost of a freshwater license totals \$38.

Capital projects money from the EPF for repairs to the fish hatcheries has been cut from \$5 million to \$1.5 million, and probably will be cut more.

At the January 3rd Board of Directors' meeting of the NYSCC, the Directors agreed that these issues could not wait until the NYSCC's Legislative Meeting in March. The Board voted as follows:

- 1- To support a reasonable increase in license fees;
- 2- To support the Trout and Salmon stamp, with monies dedicated to the maintenance and staffing of fish hatcheries and the stocking of fish; and to change the wording to "State stamp required when angling for and in possession of trout or salmon";
- 3- To support the creation of a pheasant stamp, with the money dedicated to raising and/ or purchasing pheasants and the stocking of pheasants on lands open to hunting by sportsmen;

4- To support the marine fishing license, with a couple of changes: \$6 to go into the Conservation Fund to cover costs incurred, with the remainder going into the marine account. Also, a combination license at \$29 should be offered;

5- To support the bottle bill: add a 5-cent deposit on non-carbonated beverage containers, with all unclaimed container return money going to the EPF;

I hope everyone can support these measures, so that we can keep our programs intact.  
Please send me your comments.

Yours in Conservation,

Harold L. Palmer  
President  
New York State Conservation Council, Inc.  
607-638-9013