



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

Four Hundred and Second Meeting – April 19, 2021
Department of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway,
Albany

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:00AM.

Meeting Adjourned – The meeting was adjourned at 11:32AM.

Roll Call: 9:04 AM

Ex-Officio Members Present

Deputy Commissioner of Natural Resources:

Katie Petronis

Jane McLaughlin

Voting Board Members Present

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| Tim Huss | Region 1 |
| Gordon J Whiting | Region 2 |
| Tom Williams | Region 4 |
| Jason Kemper | Region 5 |
| Dave Corr | Region 6 |
| Charles Pace | Region 7 |
| Marc Osypian | Region 8 |
| Bill Conners | FWMB |

Ex-Officio Members Absent

Senate Finance Committee

Senate EnCon Committee

Assembly Ways and Means Committee

Assembly EnCon Committee

DEC Personnel

Division of Fish and Wildlife: Tony Wilkinson,

Division of Law Enforcement: Bernard Rivers,

Voting Board Members Excused

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| Raymond Merlotto | NYSCC |
| Dale Dunkelberger | Region 9 |
| Carrie Gallagher | NYSDEC |
| Sean Mahar | NYS DEC |

Guests

Steve Hurst, Chief – Bureau of Fisheries

Chuck Nieder, Chief – Bureau of Habitat

Voting Board Members Absent

Abbreviations

Ag. & Mkts = Department of Agriculture and Markets

CFAB or the Board = Conservation Fund Advisory Board

DEC or the Department = NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

DFW = Division of Fish and Wildlife

DLE = Division of Law Enforcement

DLF = Division of Lands and Forest

DMBS = Division of Management and Budget Services

OGC = DEC Office of General Counsel

DOB = Division of the Budget

DOP = Division of Operation Services

OSC = Office of State Comptroller

FWMB = Fish and Wildlife

Management Board

Correspondence: None

Minutes of Prior Meeting:

MOTION: Dave Corr made a motion to accept previous minutes at 9:08am, Gordon Whiting was a second, motion passed.

Executive Report:

Katie Petronis, Deputy Commissioner of Natural Resources
Jane McLaughlin, Legislative Affairs

- Jane provided updates on the youth hunting package, mentioning that there seems to be deep seated philosophical opposition in the assembly. Jane mentioned a 2-year pilot program for upstate counties, as well as outreach to help notify counties of the opportunity. Jane mentioned there is open concern in the Assembly and Senate about youth hunters hunting bear, and that we need to provide more explanation to them to help correct their perception.
- Katie provided the administrative update, expressing hopefulness that we are moving into a better position for staffing this year than we have been in the past. Tony mentioned his hopefulness as well, referencing the critical fills that Fish and Wildlife recently put in for. Tony mentioned that filling positions will still be a slow drip, as with retirements 24 positions have gone this year.

Division of Fish and Wildlife Report:

Tony Wilkinson, Director; Steven Hurst, Chief, Bureau of Fisheries; Chuck Nieder, Chief, Bureau of Habitat

- Steve gave a presentation on the smartphone fishing app, an interactive map application that will cost \$5 per year and be available to those with fishing licenses.
 - Timothy asked who owns this app/technology. Steve replied that the code for the app is co-owned with the vendor.
 - Tom asked if we would be allowing ads on the app to generate revenue and make it free. Steve replied that we want people to use this app to fish, and do not want ads.
 - Dave asked if this would need to go through legislative and approved by the legal team. Steve replied that he had wondered the same but was advised that it does not need to go through legislative because it is not a license.

- Dave asked if this application could track where people are and what access site's they are using. Steve commended Dave on the good question and will bring this up to the vendor.
 - Charlie asked about making the app available to everyone and not just those with licenses, and about a 1-month free trial. Steve replied that our focus for this app is to help anglers and encourage people to fish and buy fishing licenses.
 - Jason asked when the goal for this app to go live is. Steve replied that our goal to go live with the app is April 1, 2022.
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- Steve asked board members if they would be willing to draft a letter in support of this app. Dave Corr motioned to draft a letter in support, Bill Connors seconded this motion, motion passed with none opposed.
 - Steve gave regulatory updates for Fisheries, mentioning that a rule making to liberalize Oneida Lake walleye take limits is making its way through circulation.
 - Steve provided updates on staffing at hatcheries, Catskill Hatchery has hired its first female manager, assistant managers at Rome and Salmon River have been hired, and some entry-level positions have been filled. Steve mentioned that 2 positions are being left currently, 2 more will be lose this summer, and that 20% of Fish Culture staff are at the age that they could retire. Steve also said that the Aqua Culture Engineer that was assisting with Bath Hatchery construction has been offered another job and will be leaving the department.
 - Jason brought up that there is a lot of money sitting in Hatcheries and that we should try to get it moving for better chances at future approvals.
 - Jim gave updates on the HRSI report, siting that there were 22 violations of which 9 were party issues, and 13 were self-inflicted. None of the HRSI's were related to hunters who have taken the online course.
 - Jim provided an update on the Private Lands Access survey, the survey will go out to 10,000 citizens statewide and ask what practices they use for allowing hunting, fishing and birdwatching on their land. The survey will also ask what concerns folks have, as well as the characteristics of their land.
 - Jim gave updates regarding the WMA regulations that are out for public comment, citing that on Friday we had 21 comments with the general flavor of them being supportive.
 - Charlie asked about parameters and requirements for shooting areas on WMAs. Jim responded that we want to designate safe spots on WMAs and maybe establish designated ranges on certain WMAs, as some are too small to establish ranges on.

- Charlie voiced strong concerns from both Region 7 and CFAB about the new proposed verbiage in Part 51.4, paragraph F, sentence 2 which changes when snowmobile trails open in a WMA to after the end of the “regular big game season.” There is a strong feeling that this is not in the best interest of the hunting community, especially with both the regular late muzzleloader, archery crossbow season, and the new “Holiday Season” taking place after that time frame. Charlie pointed out that for the justification of the new “Holiday Hunt” a 4”-6” snow data was used as criteria, yet for the Part 51 proposal for opening snowmobile trails on a WMA 3” snow level was used as the criteria.
- Bernie asked that it be reinforced that WMAs are different from State Lands, and that Forest Rangers need to stay on State Land, not WMAs.

Division of Law Enforcement Report:

Bernard Rivers, Director

- Bernie provided a staffing update for DLE, siting that they are currently down roughly 40 ECOs statewide and will be losing 5-10 more this year. Bernie encouraged members to send letters to the Commissioner asking about an academy. Bernie also mentioned that the union is pushing for a 20-year retirement bill, and that the agency may be in support but there is concern.

CFAB BUSINESS:

- The board discussed the Region 3 appointment, hoping to make progress and get the ball rolling. Bill mentioned that he knows 2 formidable candidates.
- The board discussed promoting sport with youth hunting, expressing difficulty understanding why the public is so misinformed and siting that after checking with DLE there have been no reports of anyone being attacked by a bear while hunting.
- Dave motioned for a letter to be drafted in support of ECOs having primary stake in WMAs and to push for an academy. The motion passed without opposition.
- Tom mentioned that he believes the anti-police movement is impacting hiring for ECOs, game wardens, and other law enforcement positions.

- Tom brought up anti-gun legislation/advocacy in NYS and how it could severely impact hunting and shooting sports moving forward.

Bill Conners motioned to adjourn the meeting, Dave Corr was a second, motion passed.