



New Hampshire Wildlife Coalition

February 11, 2025

Members of the House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee

Dear Chairman Spillane and Members of the Committee:

We strongly support House Bill 202, which modernizes the role of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission by shifting its responsibilities to an advisory capacity while ensuring that the Executive Director maintains the authority to make informed, timely decisions. This change aligns the Commission's structure with best practices followed by nearly all New Hampshire departments and agencies and private organizations, where leadership is streamlined for efficiency and accountability.

The Commission's Outdated Structure No Longer Serves New Hampshire

When the current structure of the Fish and Game Commission was established in 1935, geographic representation was a practical necessity. With limited communication tools, having commissioners from each county ensured voices from across the state were heard.

However, in 2025—when high-speed communication, virtual meetings, and real-time data are readily available—this structure is no longer necessary. Worse, it now actively hinders efficiency. Decision-making by committee, while well-intended, introduces delays, dilutes accountability, and creates unnecessary bureaucratic roadblocks.

Why House Bill 202 Is the Right Solution

Under the proposed changes, the Commission would serve as an advisory body rather than a governing entity, ensuring the Executive Director can make informed but decisive leadership choices. This model:

1. **Increases Efficiency** – A single Executive Director can act swiftly without the delays of scheduling meetings, debating, and securing consensus from multiple individuals.
2. **Creates Clear Accountability** – With an empowered Executive Director, responsibility for successes and failures is well-defined. Currently, authority is dispersed among multiple commissioners, making it difficult to hold anyone

accountable for poor financial or policy decisions. As an example, which Commissioners are held accountable for the current budgetary crisis?

3. **Reduces Bureaucratic Waste** – Commissions introduce extra layers of bureaucracy that slow decision-making, while a single Executive Director ensures streamlined operations.
4. **Prevents Political Gridlock** – The Commission, as a multi-member entity, has the potential for internal disagreements and outside political pressure. A single Executive Director would be far more insulated from these issues, ensuring that policy decisions are made based on expertise rather than political maneuvering.
5. **Prioritizes Expertise Over Politics** – Unlike politically appointed commissioners, Executive Directors are selected based on their qualifications and experience. This is critical in a department that must balance wildlife conservation, public safety, and fiscal responsibility. In the past, the NH Fish and Game Commission has even overridden recommendations from properly qualified scientists—a clear example of the dangers of an outdated governance model.
6. **Reduces Special Interest Influence** – The Commission has been susceptible to lobbying and ‘behind-the-scenes’ legislative influence. An independent Executive Director would be better positioned to focus on the agency’s true mission, free from undue outside influence.

As a former business owner and executive who has worked with both Boards of Directors and committee-based conservation organizations, I have seen firsthand how much more effective a clear leadership structure can be. Committee-based governance and decision-making leads to stagnation, inefficiency, and missed opportunities.

Now is the time for New Hampshire to modernize its approach. House Bill 202 provides a practical, proven solution that will bring our Fish and Game Department in line with the best practices of both the public and private sectors.

Let’s eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and empower true leadership.

Vote Ought To Pass on House Bill 202.

Thank you,

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Weldon Bosworth, Ph.D.

Gilford, and representing NH Wildlife Coalition