



February 12, 2025

Chairman James Spillane
House Committee on Fish and Game and Marine Resources
Room 307
Legislative Office Building
33 North State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: House Bill 202 – Relative to the duties of the fish and game commission.

Position: Oppose

Dear Chairman Spillane and Members of the House Committee on Fish and Game and Marine Resources,

On behalf of the American Sportfishing Association, I write to respectfully encourage you to oppose House Bill 202.

HB 202 poses a considerable threat to the management of fish and wildlife management in New Hampshire. The bill would strip the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department's Commission of its regulatory authority, relegating the Commission to a purely advisory body. The Commission, which has successfully managed, conserved and restored the state's fisheries for over 150 years, utilizes science-based fishery management that has supported the growth of a thriving recreational fishing industry. Placing management authority in the sole hands of a politically appointed position risks the future of New Hampshire's fish and wildlife resources and the anglers and businesses that depend on them.

From the Connecticut Lakes to Hampton Harbor, between fly fishing, conventional fishing and ice fishing, New Hampshire's freshwater and saltwater fisheries generate significant economic activity. In 2024 alone, resident and non-resident anglers spent \$837 million in the Granite State, creating an economic impact of over \$1.1 billion. These expenditures support 5,780 jobs in the state, and facilitate \$46 million in state and local taxes. Over 180,000 anglers fish in New Hampshire annually, supporting this economic activity through tackle and gear purchases, tourism, guided trips and fishing tournaments.

This economic activity not only creates jobs, but through license and stamp purchases, excise taxes on sportfishing equipment and direct donations, directly funds the Fish & Game Department as well. New Hampshire's anglers and hunters have funded the state's fish and wildlife management for decades, through a user-pay, public-benefit model of fisheries conservation. Removing regulatory authority from the Fish & Game Department's Commission

could upset this critical balance between the fishing public and the Department entrusted with scientific management of the state's fisheries.

The Department and Commission have effectively worked to manage New Hampshire's many fisheries, conserving anadromous fish like shad and Atlantic salmon, stocking trout statewide and managing increasingly popular bass fishing opportunities. Scientific, accountable and effective management through the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Commission underpins these success stories and the industry that depends on them. Removing regulatory authority from this body and vesting it in a single appointee jeopardizes the future of these fisheries, subjecting them to the potential whims and political priorities of an administration.

ASA respectfully requests your opposition to this legislation, and encourages your committee to uphold regulatory authority in the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Connor Bevan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "C".

Connor Bevan
Inland Fisheries Policy Director
American Sportfishing Association