

Sunset Advisory Commission
Board and Commission Review of __Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board_____

The Commission reviews every State board and commission and takes testimony regarding whether each board or commission should continue to operate or be eliminated and whether the powers and duties of any board or commission should be revised. Each board and commission has the burden of justifying its continued operation.

The Commission also reviews whether members of a board or commission should be entitled to a per diem and, if so, the amount of that per diem.

In testifying before the Commission, you should be able to provide the following information:

- 1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet? Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years. Provide information on where agendas and minutes of meetings can be found.**

The Fish and Wildlife Board generally meets monthly with some exceptions. The Board met 9 times in FY 19 and 8 times in FY 20.

Agendas and minutes can be found here: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/about-us/fish-and-wildlife-board>

- 2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.**

Fish and Wildlife Board Members are listed below. There is one representative from each county. Members are appointed by the Governor for staggered 6 year terms pursuant to 10 V.S.A. 4041. A \$50 per meeting per diem and mileage reimbursement is available to member though not all members claim those reimbursements.

Tim Biebel, Chair, Windsor County, Windsor, VT
March 1, 2016 to February 28, 2022

Bryan McCarthy Grand Isle County, North Hero, VT
July 1, 2018 to February 29, 2024

Wendy Butler, Addison County, New Haven, VT
July 1, 2018 to February 28, 2022

William Pickens, Lamoille County, Wolcott, VT
April 1, 2015 to February 28, 2021

David Fielding Jr., Bennington County, Manchester Ctr., VT
March 1, 2016 to February 28, 2022

Michael Bancroft Orange County, West Topsham, VT
March 1, 2019 to February 28, 2025

David Robillard, Orleans County, North Troy, VT
March 1, 2017 to February 28, 2023

Nancy Mathews, Chittenden County, South Burlington, VT
June 19, 2020 to February 28, 2026

Martin Van Buren, Rutland County, Poultney, VT
January 1, 2020 to February 28, 2023

Michael Kolsun, Essex County, Brighton, VT
April 25, 2018 to February 29, 2024

Brian Bailey, Washington County, Barre, VT
March 1, 2019 to February 28, 2025

Jay Sweeny, Franklin County, St. Albans, VT
March 1, 2019 to February 28, 2025

Dennis Mewes, Windham County, Dummerston, VT
April 1, 2015 to February 28, 2021

Brad Ferland, Caledonia County, Hardwick, VT
November 1, 2020 to February 28, 2026

3. Provide an overview of the board or commission's purpose.

The Fish and Wildlife Board sets procedures and regulations as enabled by Vermont Statutes related to season lengths, bag limits, method of take, geographic limits, and other matters related to regulated hunting, trapping, and angling.

4. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?

That purpose is still needed. Hunting, trapping, and angling regulations are always evolving, annual modifications are needed for all categories of regulations based on population

health and abundance of fish and game species. Each year, via Board procedure, the Board sets the number of moose and antlerless deer permits by wildlife management units, and bag limits, season dates and methods of take for specific migratory game birds.

If the Board no longer fulfilled that purpose the Department would be the regulatory agency charged with fulfilling those statutory requirements.

5. How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose? What evidence can you provide to substantiate that performance?

The Board is executing the purpose well. The Board holds several public hearings and takes public input via several mediums successfully throughout the year to pass annual species bag and territorial limits. Board members are accessible to community members as one resides in each county, their emails are publicized.

6. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?

The Fish and Wildlife Department could, in the absence of the Board, establish its own regulations. However, doing so without the Board would eliminate an important check-in with public citizens who have expertise on various methods of take

7. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission's functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?

There is no overlap with any other state board or commission.

8. Does the board or commission's enabling law continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?

Yes

9. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?

FY20 expenditures totaled \$2,393.99. These expenditures are funded by fishing and hunting license receipts.

10. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?

No. The Fish and Wildlife Department produces various reports and studies some of which are related to the work of the Fish and Wildlife Board but are not Board responsibilities.

11. How would you measure the performance of the board or commission?

There are two ways to effectively measure the performance of a Board. The first is on administrative functions such as considering rules, gaining public input on rules, administration of meetings, responsiveness to the public and complying with public meeting laws and other laws. The Fish and Wildlife Board, supported by the Department, is highly functional based on this measure.

The second way to measure success is achievement of the larger mission. In this case, that mission is to provide rules which protect and enhance populations of Vermont's game species, and provide responsible access for hunters, anglers and trappers to those resources. Again, the Board, supported by the Department, is highly functional in its achievement of these goals. Under the Board and the Department, most game species in Vermont have recovered from near or total elimination a century or more ago, and are healthy and abundant on the landscape.

Having said that, the Board is not without controversy. Primarily, this is because there are a small but vocal minority who would like the Board to support efforts to curtail or eliminate various types of hunting and trapping for reasons outside of threats to wildlife populations or habitats. This Board is not charged with the job of assessing whether various types of hunting and trapping should be legal, but instead is charged with implementing effective and reasonable rules governing hunting and trapping enabled by Vermont Legislature.