

The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

October 2, 2018

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maggie Wood Hassan
330 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster
137 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Carol Shea-Porter
1530 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear New Hampshire Congressional Delegation:

We are a Commission authorized by Senate Bill 48, Chapter 206:1-d to study the efficiency and effectiveness of Fish and Game Department operations in our great state of New Hampshire. We and the leadership of both the New Hampshire House and Senate are respectfully requesting your assistance and input into this stated mission.

In our deliberations, we have concluded that the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is woefully underfunded and are committed to finding funding sources to rectify this shortfall. As you know, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is considered a self-funding agency. You also are acutely aware that as a self-funding agency the Department is very dependent on hunting and fishing license sales, as well as federal funds provided by the enactment of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Act of 1937, commonly referred to as the Pittman Robertson Act, and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration act of 1950, commonly referred to as the Dingell - Johnson Act. Both of these federal funding mechanisms are based on complicated formulas derived from license sales, land mass area, water surface area, and other considerations. While these two acts contribute greatly to game and fish management respectively, they cannot be used for any other purposes.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department has absorbed many new duties over the years and because of population increases and changing outdoor recreational interests its funding base has been stretched to a breaking point. We have concluded that it is imperative to find funding for this most important agency. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department plays a vital role in the natural infrastructure of the State of New Hampshire. The Department is responsible for maintaining the fragile wildlife resources, as well as, being responsible for the public's safety in the woods and waters of New Hampshire. While we have summed up what the Fish and Game Department means to New Hampshire's quality of life, and its economy in one sentence, we see it as an agency that the state cannot afford to neglect.

It is no secret that the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior are also important stakeholders in insuring this quality of life, and the economy of the state. They are in charge of approximately 13.8% of the entire land mass of the state. By its own figures, the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) attracts 6,000,000 visitors yearly. There are 1200 miles of hiking trails on the WMNF alone. There are 450 miles of snow machine trails in the forest that contribute to sustaining the economy of the surrounding towns. While we appreciate what having 13.8% of the land mass of the state means to preserving the aforementioned quality of life and the stability of our economy, we also understand what role the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department plays in wildlife management, law enforcement, and search and rescue on these lands. The Department plays a crucial role on these federally owned lands. New Hampshire Conservation Officers patrol these lands daily. They are called upon to be responsible for all search and rescue operations in the state which includes these federally owned lands. The Fish and Game Department has calculated that 47% of all search and rescue operations in the state take place on these federal lands. While we recognize that during the winter months the United States Forest Service is responsible for search and rescue in the Cutler River Drainage, we recognize that this is but a small area in comparison to the entire forest.

We understand that federal regulations make it possible for the Secretary of Agriculture to authorize cooperation, and provide reimbursement to "any state or political subdivision thereof, for enforcement of their laws within the National Forest". We also understand that the Secretary of the Interior can enter into "Operative Agreements" similarly. We are aware that they have entered into the agreements with other local and county entities here in New Hampshire.

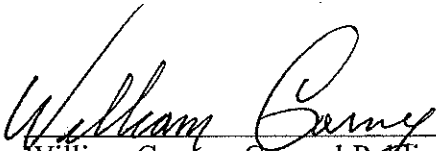
This Commission is committed to finding funding sources inside and outside the State of New Hampshire's system. We are respectfully requesting that you, as our United States delegation, help us in this long overdue endeavor by requesting the Departments of Agriculture and Interior engage with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to work on crafting arrangements that would reimburse the State of New Hampshire for costs incurred on federally owned land here in the state. This is in the best interest of our protecting precious resources, insuring public safety, and sustaining a vibrant economy for the State of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

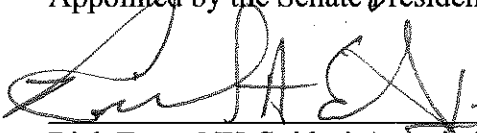


Senator Kevin Avar, Chair
Commission to Study the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Fish and Game
Department Operations
NH State Senate, District 12
107 North Main Street
State House, Room 105-A
Concord, NH 03301

cc: The Honorable Christopher Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire



William Carney, General Public
Appointed by the Senate President



Rick Estes, NH Guides' Association



Matthew Leahy, Public Policy Manager
Society for the Protection of NH Forests



Senator Chuck Morse, Senate President
Senate District 22



Glenn Normandeau, Executive Director
NH Fish and Game Department



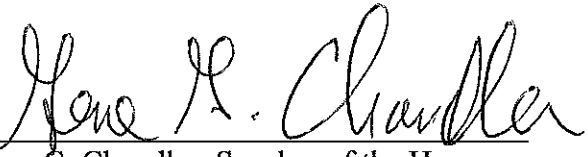
Representative Stephen Shurtleff
House Minority Leader
Merrimack – District 11



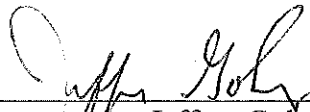
Representative Robert Theberge
Coos – District 3



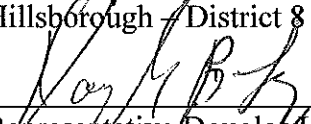
Rick Van de Poll
Recreational Interest
Appointed by the Senate President



Gene G. Chandler, Speaker of the House
Carroll – District 1



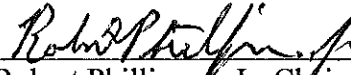
Representative Jeffrey Goley
Hillsborough – District 8



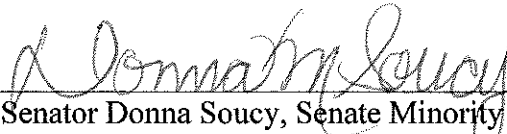
Representative Douglas Long
Merrimack – District 4



Jim Morse, Hunting, Fishing, Trapping
Appointed by the House Speaker



Robert Phillipson, Jr. Chair
NH Fish and Game Commission



Senator Donna Soucy, Senate Minority Leader
Senate Minority Leader



Simon Thomson, Clerk of Commission
Agricultural Interests
Appointed by the Governor