



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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Stephanie L. Simek, Ph.D.
Executive Director

September 30, 2025

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DEC 03 2025

Her Excellency, Governor Kelly A. Ayotte
And the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, NH 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 20:7, authorize the acceptance of the NH Fish & Game Department's Biennial report for the period July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025, effective upon Governor & Council approval.

EXPLANATION

Attached, please find copies of the Fiscal Years 2024 – 2025 Biennial Report for the NH Fish & Game Department, as required by law.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie L. Simek, Ph.D.
Executive Director



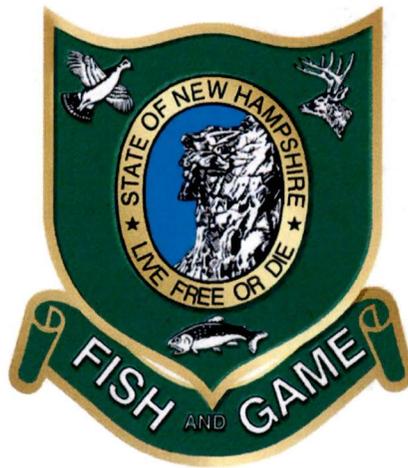
NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

Conserving New Hampshire's Wildlife and Habitat for 160 Years

BIENNIAL REPORT

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Pursuant to RSA 206:9-a • Submitted October 1, 2025



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

Biennial Report

Fiscal Years 2024-2025
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025

Pursuant to RSA 206:9-a
Submitted October 1, 2025

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
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KELLY A. AYOTTE
Governor

EXECUTIVE COUNCILORS

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Janet Stevens
District 3

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As of 6/30/25



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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September 30, 2025

Her Excellency, Governor Kelly A. Ayotte
And the Honorable Council
State House, 107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Ayotte and Honorable Members of the Council:

In accordance with RSA 206:9-a, I am honored to submit the Biennial Report of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department for the period spanning July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025.

New Hampshire's population, estimated at approximately 1.4 million according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 projection, has grown by 6.5% since 2010. This increase has led to greater population density across many counties—including traditionally rural areas—and has coincided with a notable rise in recreational activity. In 2023, the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that outdoor recreation contributed \$3.9 billion to New Hampshire's economy, representing 3.4% of the state's gross domestic product and placing New Hampshire 8th nationally. Activities such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching not only bolster economic output but also enrich the quality of life for residents and visitors, support local businesses, promote public health, and deepen our collective connection to the natural world.

As human populations and recreational pressures grow, so too do the demands on our state's natural resources. Many fish, wildlife, and marine ecosystems have been affected. The Department remains steadfast in its statutory mission to conserve, manage, and protect these resources and their habitats—assets that are vital to New Hampshire's ecological integrity, cultural heritage, and economic resilience. Our work ensures that wildlife populations remain healthy and that the wild places they inhabit are preserved for future generations.

The Department's operations continue to serve all who live in and visit New Hampshire. However, our primary funding source—revenues from hunting and fishing licenses—has remained relatively flat over the biennium. Meanwhile, the scope of our responsibilities and associated costs continued to expand. Supplemental General Fund support from the Legislature during the 2023–2025 biennium was instrumental in meeting critical obligations. However, a revised and sustainable funding model is essential to ensure our long-term capacity to fulfill our mission effectively.

Looking ahead, innovation and strategic planning will be key. We face growing challenges, including emerging wildlife diseases, invasive species, pollution, habitat loss, and degradation. These stressors contribute to species declines, reduced genetic variation, increased competition among species, and more. Our commitment to conservation remains unwavering, but these pressures demand adaptive management, rigorous scientific research, and strong collaboration with stakeholders across all sectors.

The Department is dedicated to managing New Hampshire's natural resources in a way that is scientifically sound, fiscally responsible, and socially inclusive. Our staff is committed to excellence in public service and to fostering meaningful connections between people and the outdoors. We will continue to listen to our communities and make informed, science-based decisions that serve both people and nature.

We look forward to continued partnership with the Governor, the Executive Council, the Legislature, and the public to ensure the sustainability of the Department and the invaluable resources it protects. On behalf of the Department, I extend sincere appreciation for your ongoing support.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie L. Simek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S'.

Stephanie L. Simek, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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Department

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Game Department employees and
volunteers, unless noted otherwise.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department was established on June 30, 1865, as the Fisheries Commission. It was organized in its current format in 1935 in accordance with R.L. 240:1 (RSA 206:1), which states that, "There shall be a Fish and Game Department under a Commission to be known as the Fish and Game Commission."

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Commission members are appointed by the Governor and Executive Council. There are 11 members, one from each county in the state, plus one representing the seacoast area. No more than six commissioners can be members of the same political party. Commission members must be well informed on the subject of fish and wildlife. Their duty is to represent the citizens of New Hampshire and be the stewards of the fish, wildlife, and marine resources of the State of New Hampshire and to set general policy for: conservation of wildlife; development, funding, and implementation of a strategic plan for the operation of the Department; acquisition and development of public access to lands and waters for recreational use consistent with New Hampshire law; conservation education and building support for Department programs; and establishment of positions on proposed legislation that affects the Department and fish, wildlife, and marine resources.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is responsible for overseeing all departmental operations, including the supervision of staff and enforcement of state laws related to fish, wildlife, and marine resources. Appointed by the Governor and Executive Council upon nomination by the Fish and Game Commission, the Director must be a skilled administrator with demonstrated expertise in conserving and restoring the state's natural resources. Serving a four-year term, the Director works collaboratively with the Fish and Game Commission and oversees a wide range of programs including habitat protection, law enforcement, public information, species management, and recreational licensing. This role involves strategic planning, budget management, and coordination with state and federal agencies to ensure the sustainable use and enjoyment of New Hampshire's natural resources.

The Office of the Executive Director also manages budget development, federal aid coordination, legislative and regulatory affairs, environmental review, and personnel administration, while playing a key role in shaping policies that govern hunting, fishing, and wildlife conservation throughout the state. The Environmental Review Coordinator serves in the Executive Director's Office and provides technical guidance to individuals, environmental consultants, federal and state agencies, municipalities, and non-governmental organizations to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts to fish and wildlife resources and their habitats from proposed development projects. The types of projects reviewed include, but are not limited to: hydropower development and compliance, most Department of Transportation development projects, solar and wind energy projects, surface and ground water withdrawals, dam removals to facilitate fish passage, water quality and contaminant impacts, wetland impacts, aquatic herbicide treatments, large coastal dredge projects, and review of environmental regulations that affect fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The Environmental Review Coordinator is the liaison with many statewide policy bodies, including the State Wetlands Council, Water Council, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's Natural Resources



*Stephanie L. Simek, Ph.D.,
Executive Director*

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

Committee, Dredge Management Task Force, Pesticide Board, and the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resource's Open Project Selection Process Advisory Board.

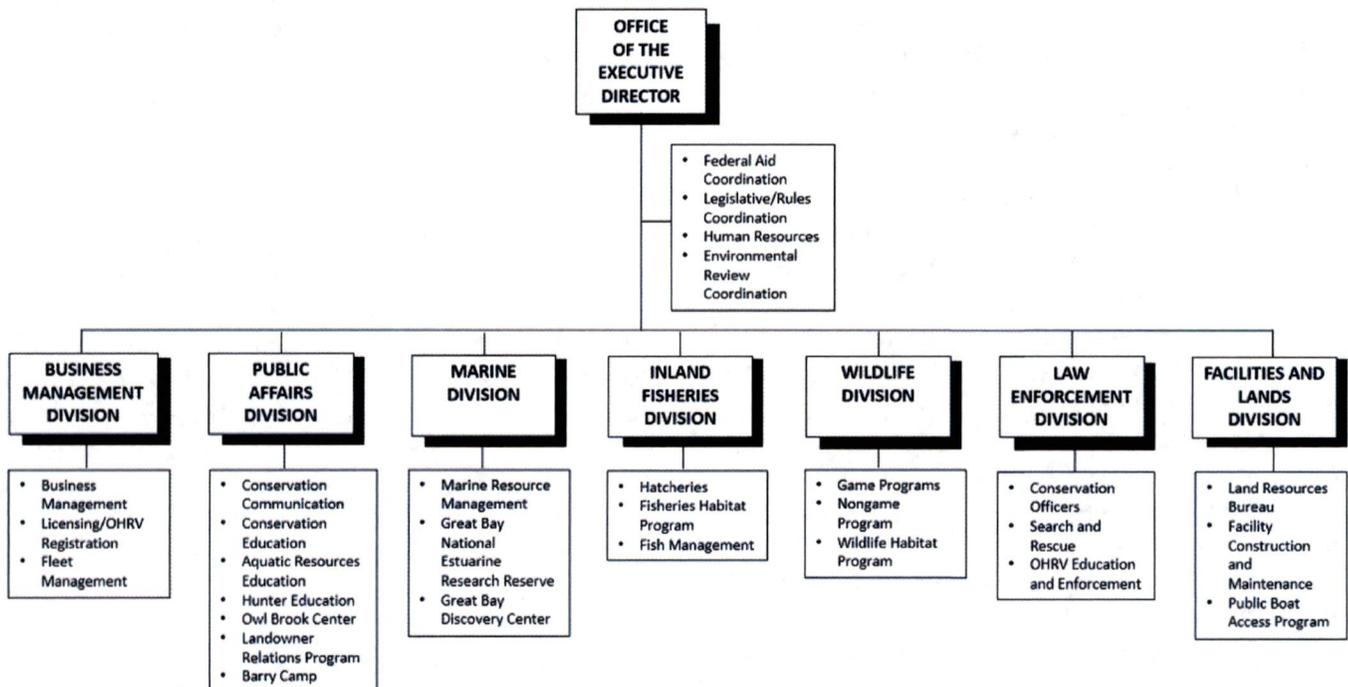
The Executive Director's Office also coordinates the Department's participation in various federal assistance programs. Activities include pre-award coordination and proposal review, application submission, post-award grant management and compliance, as well as supporting the Business Division with certain aspects of fiscal management, budgeting, and federal assistance audits. Federal revenue received as reimbursement for approved grant costs accounted for approximately one quarter of total Department revenue. Federal funds received through these programs are critical to accomplishing the Department's mission and help support a wide range of activities and accomplishments in all divisions of the Department.

The Department's Human Resources (HR) Unit, which is comprised of the Human Resources Administrator, Human Resources Coordinator, and Payroll Officer, administers all aspects of human resources and payroll operations for the Department. These functions include, but are not limited to: recruitment, onboarding, benefits and payroll, training and development, performance management, employee relations, regulatory compliance, position management, handling disciplinary needs, ensuring compliance with Labor Laws and regulations, overseeing training programs, and human resources analytics. The bi-weekly payroll process involves approximately 180 full-time and 37 part-time and seasonal employees. All leave administration, including Worker's Compensation and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), is managed by the HR Unit, as well as the drug and alcohol screenings of the Department's Commercial Driver's License (CDL) holders, as required by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. In addition to managing all of the human resources operations for the Department, the HR Unit also assists members of the public with all human resources-related inquiries.

Our Mission:

As the guardian of the state's fish, wildlife and marine resources, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department works in partnership with the public to:

- *Conserve, manage and protect these resources and their habitats;*
- *Inform and educate the public about these resources; and*
- *Provide the public with opportunities to use and appreciate these resources.*



ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

MAJOR DIVISIONS

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department carries out its mission through the work of seven divisions: Business, Facilities and Lands, Inland Fisheries, Law Enforcement, Marine Fisheries, Public Affairs, and Wildlife.

The **Business Division** facilitates all business functions for the Department. It is responsible for issuing and collecting the revenue from the sale of fishing and hunting licenses and associated permits, as well as the processing of all accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash management, federal and other grants, financial management, and inventory control. Division staff supervise the purchase of all equipment, materials, and supplies and coordinate all contracts. The Business Division also oversees the Department's fleet and manages the Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle (OHRV) Registration Program. Division staff interact daily with other state agencies and provide all shipping and receiving functions, mail, and courier duties for the Department.

The **Facilities and Lands Division** is responsible for the management and maintenance of all Fish and Game properties statewide, including over 160 buildings, 135 boat ramps, 130 dams, and 7 fish ladders. The Division also provides the design and construction of public boating access facilities and fabrication of information kiosks and sanitary facilities.

The **Inland Fisheries Division** is responsible for all freshwater fish within both state and interstate waters. Fisheries biologists work to protect and restore fish resources and aquatic habitat, as well as provide anglers in New Hampshire with diverse fishing opportunities. To accomplish this work, the Division is comprised of major programs. The Large Lakes Program focuses on trout and salmon fisheries in the largest lakes of the state and conducts annual surveys of forage fish on which the trout and salmon fisheries depend. The Warmwater Program conducts annual surveys on many of the state's warmwater fish such as largemouth bass and black crappie. The Coldwater Program coordinates assessments of brook trout in streams throughout the state, information that is essential to the wise conservation of our state's official freshwater fish. The Fisheries Habitat Program protects and restores priority fish habitat across the state with our many partners and works closely with the Coldwater Program. The Fish Conservation Program assesses and restores migratory fish in the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers as well as protecting rare fish species. Fish Culturists are responsible for operating Fish and Game's six fish hatch-



New Hampshire Fish and Game Headquarters in Concord

eries to meet a variety of the Division's management program needs.

The **Law Enforcement Division** is responsible for enforcement of all laws and rules pertaining to fish, wildlife, and marine resources. The Division is responsible for marine species enforcement, not just along the New Hampshire coastline, but also in federal jurisdictional waters as Deputized Federal Officers. The Conservation Officers have the authority to enforce all state laws. The officers prosecute all of their own criminal and fish and game cases in the NH District Court System. Conservation Officers schedule and assist the Fisheries Division with fish stocking, work with the Wildlife Division on pheasant stocking, and monitor all activities related to hunting, fishing, and trapping. The officers respond to instances of reported rabid animals and all nuisance animal complaints across the state. The Division has a statutory mandate to coordinate all search and rescue operations occurring in the woodlands and inland waterways of New Hampshire, including searching for runaways, missing persons, and the elderly as well as all searches conducted within the White Mountains or along our inland waterways. Fish and Game Law Enforcement is the lead agency for search and rescue in New Hampshire's Emergency Operations Plan under NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The Division is also responsible for the enforcement of OHRV and snow machine laws and rules and conducts the majority of accident response and investigations around snowmobile and OHRV use and coordinates all related safety education and training programs. Conservation Officers are also called upon to assist other law enforcement agencies within the state when their specialized skills or equipment is needed, such as K-9s, side-scan sonar, or the Dive Team.

The Law Enforcement Division is structured as six differ-

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

ent districts across the state. Each district has a Lieutenant assigned as a District Chief and a Sergeant assigned as an Assistant District Chief. They are responsible for managing six to eight field Conservation Officers within each of those districts. Each District Conservation Officer is assigned multiple towns to patrol and they are responsible for calls and enforcement within those towns.

The **Marine Fisheries Division** is responsible for managing, conserving, and protecting the rich natural resources of the state's coast, harbors, and estuaries. The Division manages and develops monitoring programs for important recreational and commercial fisheries and marine species and protects habitats. As part of the responsibilities for fisheries management of ocean species, the Division is a collaborative partner with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the New England Fisheries Management Council in making management decisions. To further the understanding of some important species, the Division conducts research collaboratively with partners. The Marine Division licenses and monitors aquaculture in partnership with the NH Department of Environmental Services and the NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services. It also oversees the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR). The research program at GBNERR focuses on understanding the structure and function of the Great Bay ecosystem and the effects of natural and human-induced changes. The Reserve's research and monitoring efforts focus on four themes: water quality, land use change, biological communities, and climate variability. The Great Bay Discovery Center hosts a variety of educational programs throughout the year which are designed to teach visitors about the unique natural and cultural resources of the Great Bay Estuary.

The **Public Affairs Division** is responsible for all communication and education of the agency including preparation and submission of the biennial report. Division staff work to inform and educate, build public support for conservation and the Department's mission, and encourage participation in hunting, angling, and other outdoor activities. The Division provides information through the agency website, a wide variety of publications including the *New Hampshire Wildlife Journal* magazine and law digests, as well as television and radio programs, posters, videos, social media, podcasts, advertising, exhibits, media relations, shows and events, merchandising, and marketing and promotion.

Its educational programs include: Hunter Education and Trapper Education; the Let's Go Fishing Program; the Watershed Education Program; the NH Becoming an Outdoors

Woman (BOW) Program; the Wildlife Education Program and teacher training; and a variety of workshops for the public, such hunting and fishing talks, hands-on workshops, and other trainings.

The Division also manages the Owl Brook Hunter Education Center in Holderness, which provides outdoor educational programming, and the Barry Conservation Camp, which teaches children about conservation at its summer sessions every year.

Within the Public Affairs Division, the Landowner Relations Program works in partnership with hunters, anglers, and landowners to maintain access to private lands for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. This program identifies issues and concerns that landowners face in keeping their properties open and works proactively to address them.

The Public Affairs Division also serves as the liaison for the department to the nonprofit Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire.

The **Wildlife Division** manages, maintains, protects, and conserves the state's game and nongame wildlife resources and their habitats. Game populations are managed at healthy, sustainable levels consistent with available habitat and diverse public interests. Nongame species are managed to keep common species common and to secure the sustained presence and/or recovery of threatened and endangered species.

Habitat programs are designed to conserve, protect, restore, and manage diverse wildlife habitats, including critical habitats for game and nongame species. Habitat biologists also provide technical guidance to municipalities, industrial forest owners, and private landowners for conservation purposes.

Wildlife biologists conduct surveys and analyze data to assess and monitor populations and conduct research to better inform conservation and management decisions. Biologists promulgate harvest regulations for game and furbearer species to satisfy diverse public interests and to maintain healthy wildlife populations. They also provide technical assistance to local, regional, and statewide interests to protect and enhance wildlife populations and habitats and to minimize the impacts of development on wildlife species at risk. NH Fish and Game biologists work in partnership with the US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services staff to prevent or mitigate wildlife damage to agricultural lands and private property and to ensure public safety. Biologists also respond to animal emergencies, monitor diseases, and manage state lands for the purpose of enhancing wildlife values and facilitating public use.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

PERSONNEL DATA

<u>Current Number of Employees</u>	<u>06/30/2024</u>	<u>06/30/2025</u>
Unclassified	1	1
Classified	181	180
Temporary*	<u>34</u>	<u>37</u>
Total	216	218

*Permanent employees are those occupying positions permanently established by the Legislature, whereas temporary employees are those whose service is authorized for a limited or intermittent period (full-time temporary, part-time, and seasonal).

PHYSICAL PLANT AND PROPERTY APPRAISAL

	<u>6/30/24</u>	<u>6/30/25</u>
Equipment	14,900,700	15,054,276
Physical Plant	124,839,510	125,438,463
Farm	0	0
Highway	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	\$139,740,210	\$140,492,739

RECEIPTS

General Funds	988,137	1,545,482
Federal Funds	10,604,717	10,528,540
Agency Income	12,372,514	13,363,413
Fish And Game Funds	<u>15,598,246</u>	<u>16,554,976</u>
TOTAL	\$34,879,397	\$36,418,701

EXPENDITURES

Permanent Personnel	11,658,227	12,174,824
Current Expenses	2,243,009	2,013,901
Heat, Electricity & Water	442,104	409,850
Transfers To OIT	1,157,277	1,283,998
Equipment New/Replacement	1,200,071	1,117,053
Land Acquisition	3,136,087	379,920
Transfers To Other Agencies	6,387,965	7,660,352
Other Personnel Services	1,432,680	1,586,640
Benefits	7,212,671	7,637,958
Retirement, Pension & Health Insurance	774,995	859,495
In-State & Out Of State Travel	457,158	427,946
Grants - Federal & Non Federal	68,897	280,242
Contracts For Services	730,728	3,433,814
Research And Habitat Management	1,067,946	1,126,263
Statewide Boat Access	300,523	247,203
Interagency Payments	<u>1,293,276</u>	<u>1,352,952</u>
TOTAL	\$39,563,614	\$41,992,411

Department Operations

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department fulfills its mission to conserve, manage, and protect the state's fish, wildlife, and marine resources using revenue from hunting and fishing licenses, federal and OHRV funds, donations, and other sources. We also promote public understanding of natural resources and provide education and information opportunities to engage with the public to foster interest in conservation of these resources.

License sales surged during the COVID-19 pandemic but have since returned to pre-pandemic levels. Hunting license numbers have remained steady—an achievement given national declines—while fishing licenses have seen modest growth, outperforming national trends. This reflects the dedication of our staff to outreach and retention.

At the same time, our responsibilities and public expectations continue to grow. Inflation has sharply increased costs across fuel, vehicles, equipment, electricity, facility maintenance, technology, and healthcare and benefits.

Budget Demands

The Department continues to meet its obligations and sought cost-saving measures during the biennium. These measures included reductions in fleet, deferred maintenance, and strategic management throughout most of the 2024–2025 biennium.

In late July 2024, pursuant to SB542, a legislative committee was established to evaluate the funding mechanisms and partnerships of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. The committee's primary objective was to assess the Department's financial needs and explore potential legislative solutions. It was directed to submit its findings and any legislative recommendations to the president of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the Senate clerk, the House clerk, the governor, and the state library by November 1, 2024.

While the committee did not specify dollar amounts related to general fund allocations, it concluded that the Department faces significant financial challenges. Many of its responsibilities and expenditures extend beyond the scope of serving sportspeople and wildlife directly.

Key recommendations included:

- Continuing efforts to determine whether General Fund appropriations for employee pay raises, retirement obligations, and information technology expenses can be justified and incorporated into the biennial budget process.
- Evaluating opportunities to charge other departments or applicants for services provided by Fish and Game.

- Reviewing fee structures for programs such as Hike Safe and Boat Access, with consideration for user type and duration of use.
- Establishing non-lapsing funds to better leverage federal matching dollars.
- Revising RSA provisions to allow Pittman-Robertson funds to support nongame and other eligible activities.
- Seeking reimbursement from external entities for search and rescue operations.
- Exploring expansion of mooring infrastructure that would directly benefit Fish and Game.
- Modifying the Lifetime License fee structure for residents under the age of one.

Technology upgrades remained a critical need. Many legacy systems have failed, and work continued through the support of the remaining GOFERR grant to rebuild the Department's databases. The originally contracted vendor was unable to deliver a product that met the Department's requirements. As a result, with support from the Department of Information Technology, Fish and Game shifted its approach and began engaging individual contractors to carry out the work. DOIT service costs continue to exceed \$1.2 million annually, excluding the effort to migrate the Department's databases.

The Nongame Program, supported by public donations and matched by up to \$100,000 in general funds, continued its essential role in reviewing permits related to wetlands and terrain alterations. In response to a 2019 New Hampshire Supreme Court ruling, the Fish and Game Department intensified its permit review efforts without increasing staff capacity. With funding from Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR), the Department successfully reduced average permit review times to 29 days.

Despite temporary staff vacancies, GOFERR-supported positions enabled ongoing improvements in meeting permit review deadlines. In February 2023, the Department appointed a full-time supervisor to lead the Environmental Review Program. Leveraging this leadership role and four GOFERR-funded temporary positions, the Department has significantly enhanced both the efficiency and transparency of the environmental review process.

From early 2023 to the present, key improvements include the implementation of a project tracking system, launch of an online project status page, updates to regulatory rules, development of protected species informational flyers, creation of a comprehensive frequently asked questions resource, and integration of links to relevant federal and state agencies. These efforts have further reduced the average

FINANCIAL STATUS OF FISH AND GAME

permit review time to 21 days.

During the biennial budget process for fiscal years 2026–2027, Governor Ayotte proposed consolidating the environmental review process under a single agency. Under this initiative, the Department of Environmental Services (DES) will assume responsibilities previously held by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, as well as environmental reviews related to transportation, utilities, and alteration of terrain permits formerly managed by Fish and Game.

Fish and Game will continue to conduct reviews for projects with a federal nexus and remain involved in efforts that may affect threatened or endangered species. While certain logistical and procedural details remain to be finalized, the transition is slated to begin in FY2026 under the Governor's direction.

The Department took part in the Governor's initiative to identify opportunities for streamlining operations and reducing expenditures across state agencies. As part of this effort, the Department submitted a comprehensive list of internal and external activities to the designated representative of the Committee on Government Efficiency.

Public Services and Partnerships

As participation in outdoor recreation continues to rise, so too does the demand for our services. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department remains committed to supporting anglers, hunters, and wildlife enthusiasts through species research, hatchery operations, habitat enhancement, education programs, and wildlife management. Recent data reflect healthy populations of herring, bear, deer, and upland bird species across the state.

Search and rescue operations—frequently involving lost hikers, children, or seniors—are a year-round responsibility. With only 38 Conservation Officers covering the entire state, many rescues require coordinated efforts from teams of six or more highly trained and specialized personnel. The need to fund and expand the Department's Enforcement roster remains critical.

Our Dive and K-9 Teams remain vital partners to law enforcement, providing specialized support in criminal investigations and missing person cases. Conservation Officers and Wildlife Biologists play a key role in addressing human-wildlife conflicts, assisting farmers in reducing crop damage caused by wildlife, and guiding animals away from populated areas. We also work closely with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services to collect specimens for rabies and disease testing. Importantly, most of these critical services are made possible through revenue generated from license sales.

Over the past few years, revenue from federal excise taxes supporting Pitman-Robertson (PR) funds reached record-breaking levels, with the upward trend continuing



into FY2024 and FY2025. During this time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service implemented significant revisions to its administrative requirements governing federal financial assistance. However, Fish and Game frequently approaches the ceiling of available state matching funds, which can hinder the ability to utilize eligible PR dollars, and in the worst-case scenario, result in the forfeiture of federal funds.

During the biennium, the Wildlife Division's Big Game Management Program finalized the New Hampshire Big Game Management Plan, a comprehensive 10-year strategy guiding the conservation and sustainable use of big game species. The plan, covering the period from January 2026 through December 2035, outlines the Department's goals, objectives, and management strategies to ensure long-term stewardship and public enjoyment of big game resources. It was formally presented to and adopted by the Fish and Game Commission in June 2025. To support the development of this plan, the Department collaborated with the University of New Hampshire to conduct resident opinion surveys targeting both the general public and recent hunting license holders, ensuring broad stakeholder input and align-

ment with public values.

The Department collaborated with the Fish and Game Commission to develop a comprehensive 5-year Strategic Plan (2025–2030), which was finalized in February 2025. This plan serves as an overarching guidance document for the Department, outlining core tenets and strategic priorities that will shape operations and decision making over the coming years. The Department will develop targeted management plans and actively pursue funding opportunities aligned with the Strategic Plan.

Hatchery Modernization

The Department entered into a \$50,390,000 contract with MWH Constructors, Inc. for the design and construction of the New Hampton Hatchery Modernization Project. In addition, a separate \$400,000 agreement has been executed with the Department of Administrative Services, Bureau of Public Works (DAS BPW) to provide oversight and project management throughout the duration of the project.

The full \$50,790,000 investment is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), marking it the largest infrastructure project in New Hampshire to date supported by ARPA funds. Scheduled for completion by the end of 2026, the modernization effort will significantly enhance water quality, incorporate advanced technologies to improve operational efficiency, and expand both production capacity and research capabilities over time.

Vision Going Forward

In 2025, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department proudly celebrated 160 years of dedicated service to the people, wildlife, and natural landscapes of the Granite State. This milestone is more than a marker of time—it reflects a legacy of conservation, stewardship, and public engagement that continues to shape our mission and values today.

As we look to the future, the demands on the Department are expected to intensify. Wildlife across the state is facing unprecedented pressures. A growing number of species—from birds and moose to whales and insects—are in decline, and the challenges they face are increasingly complex. Climate change is compounding these threats, bringing rising temperatures, warming waters, more frequent droughts, stronger storms, emerging diseases, shifting species ranges, increased flooding, and disruptions to food production cycles. Each of these factors has a direct impact on wildlife health, habitat stability, and ecosystem resilience.

To meet these challenges head on, the Department is taking bold steps to modernize its operations and secure long-term sustainability. We are actively reassessing our fee structures to better reflect current needs and future de-

mands. At the same time, we are expanding our grant-seeking efforts, exploring alternative revenue sources, and pursuing new partnerships that align with our mission and enhance our capacity to serve.

Internally, we have launched a series of strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening our foundation. Dedicated in-house committees have been established to focus on priority areas such as funding, technology, marketing, and program development. These teams are charged with evaluating existing systems, identifying opportunities for innovation, and recommending actionable solutions that will drive progress across the organization.

Over the next biennium, we will implement significant upgrades to our information technology infrastructure. These improvements will enhance data management, streamline operations, and improve service delivery to the public. In addition, we recognize the need for further investment in modernizing our customer service and business operations systems. We are actively exploring options to ensure these systems are equipped to meet the evolving expectations of our constituents.

Our senior management team remains deeply engaged and committed to leading meaningful change. Their leadership is focused on improving departmental performance, fostering a culture of innovation, and ensuring the long-term viability of the Department through thoughtful planning and decisive action.

New Hampshire Fish and Game remains steadfast in its commitment to innovation, fiscal responsibility, and public service. With continued support from our partners, stakeholders, and the public, we are confident in our ability to meet the challenges ahead and protect New Hampshire's natural heritage for generations to come.



FINANCIAL STATUS OF FISH AND GAME

COMPARISON OF INDIVIDUALS HOLDING PAID LICENSES TO HUNT AND FISH

(From Data Collected For USFWS License Certifications)

HUNTING						
YEAR	RESIDENT HUNTING	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE	NON-RES. HUNTING	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
2004	50,777	(1,098)	-2.1%	11,810	(290)	-2.4%
2005	49,165	(1,612)	-3.2%	11,572	(238)	-2.0%
2006	49,415	250	0.5%	11,661	89	0.8%
2007	48,786	(629)	-1.3%	10,982	(679)	-5.8%
2008	48,553	(233)	-0.5%	10,601	(381)	-3.5%
2009	48,947	394	0.8%	10,473	(128)	-1.2%
2010	48,486	(461)	-0.9%	10,815	342	3.3%
2011	46,506	(1,980)	-4.1%	9,905	(910)	-8.4%
2012	48,506	2,000	4.3%	10,562	657	6.6%
2013	50,294	1,788	3.7%	11,262	700	6.6%
2014	48,789	(1,505)	-3.0%	10,529	(733)	-6.5%
2015	47,599	(1,190)	-2.4%	10,500	(29)	-0.3%
2016	47,073	(526)	-1.1%	10,599	99	0.9%
2017	45,893	(1,180)	-2.5%	10,108	(491)	-4.6%
2018	45,590	(303)	-0.7%	9,972	(136)	-1.3%
2019	45,664	74	0.2%	10,631	659	6.6%
2020	49,742	4,078	8.9%	10,887	256	2.4%
2021	48,895	(847)	-1.7%	11,428	541	5.0%
2022	50,599	1,704	3.5%	11,529	101	0.9%
2023*	48,529	(2,070)	-4.1%	11,418	(111)	-1.0%
2024*	48,537	8	0.0%	11,800	382	3.3%
FISHING						
YEAR	RESIDENT FISHING	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE	NON-RES. FISHING	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
2004	97,947	2,036	2.1%	45,888	738	1.6%
2005	95,923	(2,024)	-2.1%	44,672	(1,216)	-2.6%
2006	96,854	931	1.0%	43,970	(702)	-1.6%
2007	99,878	3,024	3.1%	46,631	2,661	6.1%
2008	99,833	(45)	0.0%	45,160	(1,471)	-3.2%
2009	103,657	3,824	3.8%	46,313	1,153	2.6%
2010	100,941	(2,716)	-2.6%	45,502	(811)	-1.8%
2011	105,055	4,114	4.1%	46,086	584	1.3%
2012	107,843	2,788	2.7%	47,331	1,245	2.7%
2013	109,444	1,601	1.5%	47,234	(97)	-0.2%
2014	111,871	2,427	2.2%	48,661	1,427	3.0%
2015	111,013	(858)	-0.8%	49,566	905	1.9%
2016	106,910	(4,103)	-3.7%	49,657	91	0.2%
2017	105,872	(1,038)	-1.0%	50,128	471	0.9%
2018	106,242	370	0.3%	50,239	111	0.2%
2019	108,060	1,818	1.7%	51,639	1,400	2.8%
2020	135,521	27,461	25.4%	55,513	3,874	7.5%
2021	123,719	(11,802)	-8.7%	56,685	1,172	2.1%
2022	119,597	(4,122)	-3.3%	53,154	(3,531)	-6.2%
2023*	112,734	(6,863)	-5.7%	49,449	(3,705)	-7.0%
2024*	117,065	4,331	3.8%	52,227	2,778	5.6%

* Final certification to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is still pending for these years.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Business Division Federal Assistance Human Resources Unit

Business Division

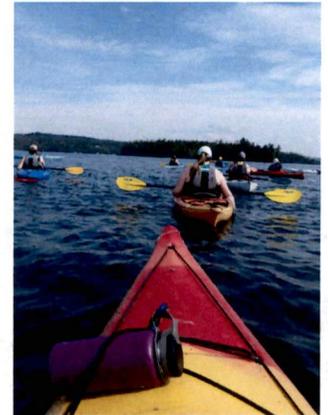
- The Business Division's Licensing Section deployed a new capability feature of our online licensing system which prohibits customers from purchasing hunting and fishing licenses if they are under suspension from any state. This is a requirement as part of the Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact.
- The Division is also moving closer to the development of a platform to migrate OHRV new and renewal registrations to an online system per RSA 215-A:45. This online system is due to be launched to the public by October 2025.

Federal Assistance Programs

- During the biennium, NH Fish and Game administered 54 separate federal assistance grants, cooperative agreements, and sub-awards totaling nearly \$24 million in federal assistance to the Department. The primary sources of federal grant dollars to the NH Fish and Game Department are the Department of the Interior through the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Department of Commerce through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Ten different assistance programs under these agencies awarded funds to the Department. Mandatory, formula-based apportionments from the US Fish and Wildlife Service under the Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration Acts provided about three-quarters of all federal revenue received by the Department.
- Federal funds received during the biennium helped NH Fish and Game accomplish a wide range of program functions, such as fish and wildlife inventories, marine and coastal programs, fish hatchery operation, construction and maintenance of boat access facilities, hunter and aquatic education programs, wildlife disease monitoring, habitat improvement and management, land acquisition and protection, and certain qualifying law enforcement activities.

Human Resources Unit

- Provides full support to the Department as well as the public.
- HR acts as a bridge between management and employees, addressing employee concerns, resolving conflicts, and fostering a positive work environment.
- Continuous process improvement to streamline procedures for efficiency to assist leadership, supervisors, employees, as well as the HR Unit.
- Updated forms and created new forms for ease of use and process flow.
- Maintained 100% compliance in agency training.
- Invests in career opportunities, work-life balance, employee recognition, employee relations, culture, and status to reward employees.
- Cultivates a workplace that enables workers to stay active and productive.
- Worked together with the Division of Personnel to come up with a new SOC wage schedules.
- HR plays a vital role in developing and implementing company policies, fostering a positive work environment, and ensuring legal compliance.
- Helps establish performance standards, conducts performance reviews, and provides feedback to employees to improve their productivity and contribution to the organization.



*Participants kayaking at
2024 Fall BOW*

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Facilities and Lands Division

Facilities and Lands Division

The Facilities and Lands Division has three distinct missions: boat access construction and maintenance, building improvements and maintenance, and energy use management and conservation.

- During this biennium, the agency continued to focus on energy-saving measures for the Department's building inventory.
- Facilities and Lands staff installed the drywell system at the Berlin Hatchery, including installing water discharge piping and 6 tanks for the new water back-wash system.
- The Facilities and Lands Division manages multiple facility-inspection and maintenance contracts for fire suppression, security systems, elevator systems, and HVAC systems in Fish and Game buildings.
- Directly coordinated 12 new roof replacements at 6 different hatchery locations.
- Cleared trees and performed site work for the Powder Mill fish hatchery new building location.
- Installed insulation and vinyl siding on building 19 at Fish and Game headquarters in Concord.
- Installed 4 windows, 2 doors, and a rain gutter system at the Region 3 office in Durham.
- Repainted two buildings at the Great Bay Discovery Center.
- The design for installation of a new roof at the headquarters building in Concord was completed and will include adding insulation to facilitate reduction in heating and cooling consumption. Roof replacement is to commence by fall 2025.
- Facilities and Lands crew repaired 12 boat access roads that were damaged in the summer of 2025 due to weather events.
- The Facilities and Lands Division manages the administration, maintenance, and operation of 136 public boat access areas controlled by the Department in the Statewide Public Boat Access Program (RSA 233-A).
- Maintenance activities included grading ramps and parking areas, striping parking lots, and invasive plant treatments. Landscaping and trash pick-up was accomplished by nine summer seasonal staff from mid-April through mid-October.
- Under the auspices of the Statewide Public Boat Access Program through a competitively bid contract, the circa 1998 double-wide plank ramp at Ashley Ferry, accessing the Connecticut River in Claremont, was refurbished with a 24-foot-wide poured-in-place concrete slab.
- An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant remote loading platform was constructed at the Ashley Ferry boat access site in late 2024. The concrete platform has two elevations to provide a range of options for boaters in wheelchairs or with other mobility issues to transfer back and forth to a boat from a firm, stable surface while the boat is still trailered. The platform is adjacent to the parking area provides a safer transfer option, and creates a more efficient launch/retrieving process at the ramp itself. NH Fish and Game modified a design obtained from the Washing-



Gorham Pond boat ramp in Dunbarton

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Facilities and Lands Division

ton State Department of Natural Resources. This is the second installation in New Hampshire of this design.

- In the fall of 2024, the steeply inclined approach lane to the water at Gorham Pond (Dunbarton) and a portion of the parking lot were armored with approximately 2,500 square feet of open-cell concrete pavers. The new installation is a permanent repair of a severely eroded natural gravel surface that was subject to consistent annual damage from stormwater run-off.
- Approximately 100 feet of the bay-side edge of the parking lot at the high-tide ramp at Adam's Point (Durham) on Great Bay was damaged by storm surge overwash. In June 2024, the structure was repaired by Facilities and Lands staff with open-cell concrete pavers and rip-rap to re-arm the edge.
- The Mooney-Clark Road to public water access on the Pemigewasset River in Bristol was transferred from town control to Fish and Game in September 2024 through the Governor and Executive Council and subsequent public hearing process. The transfer brings this memorial site for two deceased Fish and Game Conservation Officers (William Mooney and James Clark II) under the control of the Department.
- In June 2024, the Town of Derry Fire Department collaborated with the Department through a licensing agreement to install and maintain a Life Jacket Loaner Stand at the Beaver Lake boat ramp in Derry.
- Facilities and Lands Division staff deployed and removed the seasonal courtesy boarding piers at the Downings Landing (Alton), Merrymeeting Lake (Durham), Newfound Lake (Bristol), and Androscoggin River (Errol) boat access areas.



The Ashley Ferry ramp on the Connecticut River in Claremont was constructed in 1998 using narrow, thin 12-foot long concrete planks hinged together and placed in a double-lane down to the water. Over the years, ice floe forces and erosion from the river current opened the gaps between the planks and damaged the integrity of the double lane. The new ramp is designed as a single concrete platform poured in-place.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Inland Fisheries Division



Fisheries biologists use survey data from anglers to help manage stocking



Remote pond stocking helicopter

Inland Fisheries Division

The Inland Fisheries Division is responsible for all freshwater fish within both state and interstate waters. Fisheries biologists work to protect and restore fish resources and aquatic habitat and to provide New Hampshire anglers with diverse fishing opportunities. Fish culturists are responsible for operating Fish and Game's six fish hatcheries.

COLDWATER FISHERIES PROGRAM

- Aerially stocked brook trout fingerlings into nearly 50 remote ponds in 2024. Aerial stocking was not conducted in 2025.
- As a partner in a 15-state project to implement the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture's conservation action plan, 189 stream sites were surveyed in New Hampshire; 69% of these sites were found to have self-sustaining populations of brook trout. These electrofishing surveys used a standardized methodology and spanned 53 different communities primarily in Grafton County within upland drainages of the Connecticut and Pemigewasset Rivers. Close to 15 miles of stream were electrofished, helping us ascertain the ability to describe the status of several fish communities while identifying opportunities for land protection, restoration, and enhancement.
- The Stocked Trout Angler Survey has been a successful self-reporting tool that gives Inland Fisheries staff important information on catch rates and angler use of stocked waterbodies. Since the implementation in 2023, there have been over 600 responses statewide with 182 responses in FY24 and 312 in FY25.
- Evaluated two designated trout ponds in Campton and Gilford to determine over-winter survival potential related to possible management changes during the spring of 2025.

WARMWATER PROGRAM

- Warmwater fish population assessments were completed for Mt. Williams Pond (Weare), Sand Pond (Marlow), Millen Lake (Washington), and Potanipo Pond (Brookline). Assessments included determining species, species abundance, size and condition statistics, and age and growth parameters. Sampling is conducted using an electrofishing boat.
- Spring black crappie fyke net surveys were conducted on Kezar Lake (Sutton) and Pleasant Pond (Francestown).
- Surveys to evaluate young-of-the-year black bass were completed on the Connecticut River (Hinsdale and Claremont), Big Squam Lake, Forest Lake (Whitefield), Spofford Lake (Chesterfield), and Lake Winnepesaukee.
- The black bass tournament database and warmwater fish database were updated and verified.

LARGE LAKES PROGRAM

- Conducted annual fall trap-netting surveys to monitor landlocked salmon size and age-class characteristics at Big Squam, Sunapee, and Winnepesaukee Lakes.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Inland Fisheries Division

- Sustained statewide landlocked salmon management by capturing and spawning sufficient quantities of feral brood stock at Big Squam Lake each year of the biennium.
- Performed hydro-acoustic and trawl net surveys to monitor pelagic forage fish (primarily rainbow smelt) size characteristics, spatial distribution, and density at Big Squam, Merrymeeting, Newfound, Sunapee, Winnepesaukee, and Winnisquam Lakes.
- Continued to work in partnership with Nashua National Fish Hatchery to improve yearling landlocked salmon stock quality, with particular emphasis on bolstering the Lake Winnepesaukee fishery.

FISH CONSERVATION PROGRAM

- Collected data from sites throughout New Hampshire to monitor the status of American eel populations statewide.
- Finalized and implemented the Bridle Shiner Species Recovery Plan, including an ongoing evaluation of potential reintroduction sites.
- Stocked river herring into suitable spawning habitat upstream of impassable dams as part of diadromous fish restoration in the Merrimack River and coastal watersheds.
- Collected valuable data on the migration timing, size, and abundance of out-migrating silver eels from three different waterbodies.
- Participated in dam relicensing negotiations to improve fish passage at hydroelectric projects throughout New Hampshire.
- Worked with the Nashua National Fish Hatchery on an effort to restore American shad to the Lamprey River using fry stocking. Over 500 adult shad were counted at the Lamprey River fish ladder in Newmarket during the spring of 2025.

FISHERIES HABITAT PROGRAM

- Replaced an undersized 6-foot-wide by 3.5-foot-high pipe culvert with a 16-foot spanning box culvert with natural stream bed along Ballard Brook in Warner (fall 2024). This project was funded through awards from the NH Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, and the Merrimack River Watershed Council.
- Staff provided assistance to the Town of Warner to develop engineering designs for two stream crossing replacement projects on wild brook trout streams in the Warner River watershed.
- Developed volunteer teams in the Towns of Warner and Bradford to monitor water quality trends along wild brook trout streams.
- Provided technical assistance to other state agencies, federal agencies, and municipalities and non-governmental organizations on fish habitat restoration and conservation.
- Continued research with our partners on wild brook trout habitat use and the effects from our large-scale habitat restoration work at Nash Stream State Forest and elsewhere.



Brook trout

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Inland Fisheries Division



Groundbreaking for new New Hampton Hatchery

- Stream crossing assessments were conducted in specific focus watersheds. During the biennium, 280 crossings were assessed in 47 communities primarily in the Saco River, Pemigewasset River, and Connecticut River watersheds. The New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative, a multi-agency team, has developed protocols and data analysis tools to ensure data collection and model outputs are accurate. These data, in conjunction with fish survey information, will continue to be used to identify and prioritize restoration work throughout the state. Stream crossing assessments were conducted by the Department and our partners. A written summary of the status of the stream crossing and brook trout assessments completed within the Saco River Watershed and Grafton County is provided in the NH Stream Crossing Initiative Data Viewer located on NH Department of Environmental Services website.
- Organized a meeting of NH Aquatic Restoration practitioners to discuss priorities and funding opportunities. This included representatives from NH Department of Environmental Services, a long-time partner.
- Received approval from the NH Fish and Game Commission to expend up to \$300,000 to support four restoration projects: North Branch Gale River Dam removal in Bethlehem, NH; Wild Ammonoosuc River Dam removal in Benton, NH; Poole Reservoir Dam removal in Jaffrey, NH; and Chocorua Lake fish ramp in Tamworth, NH.
- Collaborated with the NH Fish and Game Marine Division and the NH Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program to address fish passage issues with the Department-owned fishway on the Winnicut River.
- Provided technical assistance to a NH Department of Environmental Services–led culvert prioritization project in the Merrimack and Piscataqua/Salmon Falls watersheds.
- Assigned two staff members to the NH Stream Crossing Initiative Implementation subcommittee.
- Engaged in discussions with NH Department of Environmental Services Dam Bureau to develop a tool to help inform decision making for the future of state-owned dams.

FISH CULTURE

- The six Fish and Game hatchery facilities produced and distributed fish for trout and salmon stocking programs throughout the state to meet a variety of the Division's management needs. The hatcheries distributed 325,109 pounds of fish in FY24 and 167,095 pounds in FY25.
- The reduction in production for FY25 was due to the demolition of the New Hampton Hatchery and the reduction of production at the Powder Mill hatchery in order to meet US Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) water quality permit requirements effective December 2025. The New Hampton Hatchery is being replaced with a new, modernized recirculating facility. Construction is ongoing and on schedule for completion by December 2026.

Law Enforcement Division

- During the biennium, Conservation Officers responded to over 22,000 calls for service for law enforcement–related complaints. Officers issued over 6,500 summonses and warnings for wildlife and fisheries violations. These included but were not limited to illegal night hunting, over limits of fish/wildlife, fishing/hunting without a license, illegal possession of exotic wildlife, taking wildlife during the closed season, and commercial fishing violations. In addition to enforcement work, Conservation Officers responded to numerous calls for service relating to sick, injured, or nuisance wildlife.
- During the FY24–FY25 biennium, the Law Enforcement Division updated a variety of necessary equipment. These upgrades included onboard computers and cruiser stands so the officers can utilize these computers while working in the field. We completed the transition over to new updated handguns with the most advanced sighting systems available on the current market to replace the handguns we have carried for the past 20 years. We have taken possession of a new airboat, a state-of-the-art Safe Boat, to be used along our coastline and inland waterways. With the addition of this new airboat, we now have two strategically stored to allow for improved response times to emergencies across the state. We have updated the training and increased the Airboat Team membership so we now have several qualified operators of this equipment.
- We have continued to purchase additional equipment to add to our newly created Drone Team. We now have two unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or drones), and we have added night-vision cameras and advanced surveillance systems. We have two licensed pilots to fly the drones, with additional officers training to become certified. We were able to secure additional side-scan sonar equipment and now have a team of four highly trained officers to operate this technical search equipment. As funding allows, we continue to make purchases relating to upgraded safety equipment for the Fish and Game Dive Team and Advanced Search and Rescue Team.
- During this past biennium, we were able to increase our K-9 teams to a total of five certified teams within the Division. These teams have proven to be invaluable assets when used for search and rescue missions, criminal investigations, and Fish and Game–related investigations.
- The vast majority of these equipment upgrades and purchases were funded through private donations, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal funding, and Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire grants. These private and federal funding sources allowed us to maintain a tight state budget during these challenging financial times in state government.

OFF-HIGHWAY RECREATION

- OHRV (off-highway recreational vehicle, wheeled vehicle) registration numbers continued to climb each year. In this last biennium, the state saw an historic high of over 77,000 registered vehicles. Conservation Officers responded and investigated a total of 284 OHRV and snowmobile accidents during this past biennium.
- New Hampshire Fish and Game is the primary OHRV/snow machine enforcement agency within the state. Over the biennium, Conservation Officers committed over 15,000 hours of enforcement time along New Hampshire’s trail systems, enforcing safety issues to include accident investigations, safe trail riding, addressing illegal trail riding, speed enforcement, and registration enforcement. In the winter months, Conservation

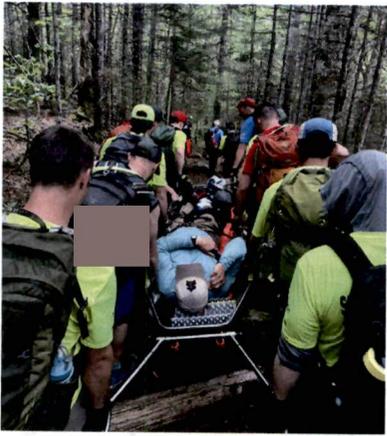


K-9 Aspen

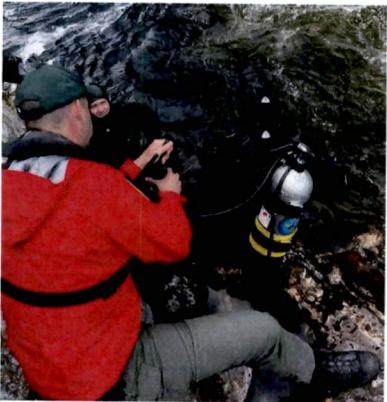


MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Law Enforcement Division



Search and rescue missions



Dive Team

Officers patrol over 7,000 miles of snow machine trails, and during the spring, summer, and fall months on approximately 1,200 miles of OHRV trails.

- Conservation Officers continued to support the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association and Easter Seals' "Camp Sno-Mo" fundraising efforts, which help to ensure summer camp opportunities for children with a variety of life challenges.
- The number of students in our OHRV and Snowmobile Safety Training courses continue to increase each year. The OHRV safety program certified over 3,000 students in safe OHRV operation during FY24 and FY25.
- During the biennium, Conservation Officers issued 3,181 summonses and warnings for OHRV violations and over 1,100 summonses and warnings for snowmobile violations. Conservation Officers utilize all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), trail bikes, utility terrain vehicles (UTVs), and snowmobiles while on patrol. The Officers responded to 2,089 calls for service relating to OHRVs and snow machines.

ADVANCED SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

- During the biennium, Conservation Officers coordinated over 380 search and rescue missions involving hikers, climbers, snowmobilers, children, and elderly people. These missions involve searching for missing or lost people, responding to injured hikers, and assisting other agencies with wilderness incidents or crimes. This total also includes the recovery of victims who died while recreating on New Hampshire's trails and within the state's wilderness areas and waters.
- Over the past several biennia, we have experienced ever increasing challenges to successfully completing these high-risk search and rescue missions. This past biennium proved to be no different. We had several high-profile missions throughout this time period, and the Division had multiple missions and recoveries that were recognized and reported on by national news agencies.

DIVE TEAM

- The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Dive Team conducted a total of 21 drowning recoveries and evidence search missions during the past biennium. This team continues to be a resource for New Hampshire State Police, New Hampshire Marine Patrol, and municipal law enforcement agencies in evidence recovery missions during major crime investigations.
- With the assistance of private donations, a number of improvements were made to safety diving equipment for the Dive Team. These updates included new and improved dive masks and suits for each diver and an improved underwater communication system to be used to communicate with and control divers during an underwater mission.
- This past biennium we were able to replace the Dive Team trailer, which also serves as a command post during these dive missions. This new larger trailer has been equipped with the latest technology to allow us to fill scuba air tanks at the scene with a cascade air system mounted within the trailer. We had enough space to allow for more equipment storage, a changing room for divers to suit up under cover, and it allowed for the creation of a small office in the front to act as a control room for the dive master to track missions. This was a significant improvement and

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Law Enforcement Division

a goal we had been seeking to achieve for many years.

K-9 TEAMS

- During the biennium, the Law Enforcement Division had five certified Conservation Officer K-9 Teams capable of assisting with search and rescue operations, evidence recovery for criminal investigations, and tracking suspects or lost victims. These teams train weekly to maintain the standards required to become certified in search and rescue, tracking, evidence detection to include firearms, and wildlife species detection. During FY24–FY25, these teams responded to 230 calls for service from multiple police agencies including New Hampshire Fish and Game, New Hampshire State Police, and multiple local law enforcement municipalities.
- These K-9 Teams continue to be a valuable asset to the state, and they are funded almost solely through private donations working with the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire. Conservation Officer Tom Houghton and his new K-9 partner Aspen became certified in tracking and evidence detection in September of 2024. All five teams became certified in Gun Shot Residue in 2024, which was a new and higher level of achievement during this biennium.
- The K-9 Team now has a Records Management System to maintain accountability for all of their training records and requirements. This new system also tracks deployment records to provide us with a more accurate and detailed account of the activities and calls for service our K-9 Teams participate in. This system has increased efficiency and improved accuracy.

AIRBOAT TEAM

- The benefits of the Law Enforcement Division's Airboat Team continue to be seen across the state. Undoubtedly, this team's contribution to search and rescue efforts is where it stands out as most valuable. In some instances, the deployment of the airboat and its trained operators has been critical to the success of search and rescue missions, especially in swift water and thin-ice conditions. This was evident most recently during recovery operations where the airboat was used not only to transport Dive Team and Underwater Search Team personnel across unsafe ice conditions, but also to provide them with a safe platform to work from in such conditions.
- Over the last couple of years, the Airboat Team has also proven to be an excellent resource to deploy for fish stocking. The airboat's ability to navigate shallow, swift water has allowed Conservation Officers, fisheries biologists, and hatchery personnel to jointly stock fish throughout sections of the Connecticut River and Androscoggin River in Coos County. This effort to stock trout thoroughly across miles of these rivers has been very well received by the fishing public, specifically with it providing ample opportunities in these areas for both shore and drift anglers alike.
- The Airboat Team received a second new airboat through a grant from the New Hampshire Port Authority. This airboat has a larger work platform and is faster and better designed than what we have had in the past. We increased membership on the Airboat Team and now have several more capable and well qualified operators available when we need them. The team has decided to maintain both airboats because deployment statewide would be more efficient using two boats.



CO Eric Fluette and K9 Moxie after a long and muddy training scenario.



Airboat

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Law Enforcement Division



The Drone Team is one of the many additional responsibilities for which Conservation Officers can volunteer.

SIDE-SCAN SONAR TEAM AND ROV TEAM

- The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Side-Scan Sonar and Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) Team utilizes the most advanced underwater search technology available today to carry out our search missions. This technology is operated by five highly trained officers and utilizes sonar and video to search water bodies, thereby reducing the use of divers and minimizing the risk to human life. Once again over this past biennium, this search capability has been key in the recovery of numerous drowning victims, the recovery of evidence, and the closure of several cases.
- Through close collaboration with other agencies, this technology has been utilized further and has become a huge asset in assisting them in fulfilling their missions as well, including the New Hampshire State Police, New Hampshire Marine Patrol, County Sheriff's Departments, and local police and fire departments

DRONE TEAM

- In 2022, New Hampshire Fish and Game acquired a new unmanned aircraft system (UAS or drone) through a grant received from the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire. In this last biennium, we purchased an additional drone along with some advanced camera equipment we use in conjunction with the drones. We now have two officers trained as pilots who are certified and licensed to fly these aircraft during search missions. These drones can be flown beyond the visual line of sight. This team has become a subdivision of our Side-Scan Sonar Team and has created policies and operational plans to enable them to work together. All drones will be flown in strict compliance with all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations. Requests for future missions will only include public safety missions (search and rescue), wildlife management and monitoring, trainings, or demonstrations.
- This equipment has already helped to locate an individual who previously had been recorded as missing in the woodlands in the southern part of the state in spring of 2025. This successful mission utilizing this latest technology and equipment brought much needed closure for a search effort and for the family of the victim.

OPERATION GAME THIEF PROGRAM

- The Division's Operation Game Thief Program (OGT) continues to experience significant growth including new public relations and outreach initiatives to increase awareness and encourage citizens to report wildlife crimes. A grant from the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire funded the purchase of a trailer to be used as an interactive display at shows and events to promote OGT. This past biennium, a new 411 anonymous tip line was opened. This allows people to download an OGT app on their cell phone to use when reporting suspected fish and game violations, which has increased our success in investigating and prosecuting these reported violations.



MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Marine Fisheries Division

Marine Fisheries Division

- Worked with federal and state partners via the New England Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to manage 62 marine species. This included participation in stock assessments and the creation and modifications to fisheries management plans for species such as striped bass, American lobster, American eel, Atlantic herring, groundfish, Atlantic menhaden, and their habitats.
- Operated fish ladders and monitored fish passage on six coastal rivers and operated American eel fish passage ramps on two coastal rivers to provide access to freshwater spawning habitat for more than 800,000 diadromous fish over the biennium.
- Procured and operated visual fish counting equipment in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to monitor fish passage at the Wiswall Dam fishway in Durham on the Lamprey River.
- NH Fish and Game continued working on a research project over the biennium in collaboration with Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, the University of New Hampshire, and St. Joseph's College to understand the influence temperature has on catch in the regional lobster trap surveys, as well as developing a specialized trap that targets smaller juvenile lobsters that are not retained in current trap surveys. These experimental traps are effective at catching smaller lobsters and are currently being used on Georges Bank to better understand the presence of juvenile lobsters in offshore areas.
- In collaboration with Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, the University of New Hampshire, and St. Joseph's College, NH Fish and Game conducted research in an effort to better understand how temperature and diet may influence the health and egg quality/quantity of ovigerous lobsters in the Gulf of Maine. This research is ongoing, and results will be forthcoming.
- Marine staff continued annual fisheries-independent monitoring programs that collect abundance and biological data on over 100 different marine species residing in or migrating through New Hampshire's marine waters. The programs include: juvenile finfish seine survey of estuaries; cooperative Maine/New Hampshire in-shore trawl survey of nearshore coastal waters from New Hampshire to the Maine/Canada border; population monitoring of juvenile American eels in certain New Hampshire coastal rivers; rainbow smelt spawning survey in Great Bay tributaries; and a survey of oysters in the Great Bay Estuary for annual growth, seeding, disease, and predation. Much of this information is used in stock assessments and fisheries management plans for some of these species.
- Monitored the catch and harvest of New Hampshire's commercial fisheries in coastal waters. New Hampshire's commercial fishing ports have averaged 11 million pounds of seafood brought in by commercial harvesters annually during the biennium. A diverse range of species is represented in the state's commercial landings, which included 31 species of fish and invertebrates, valued at approximately \$55 million in 2024.
- Additional fisheries-dependent monitoring occurring in New Hampshire coastal and estuarine waters includes catch and effort reports from permitted coastal harvesters, rainbow smelt winter angler fishery survey, and a volunteer striped bass angler survey.



NHFG staff measure rainbow smelt during a winter angler survey.



Rainbow smelt taken from the Squamscott River in Exeter



Image of video captured from visual fish counting equipment in the Lamprey River in Durham.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Marine Fisheries Division



Large river herring returns to the Lamprey River fish ladder in Newmarket.

- NH Fish and Game worked collaboratively with the University of New Hampshire Fish Movement Ecology Lab to PIT (passive integrated transponder) tag rainbow smelt in order to identify spawning site fidelity and seasonal migratory movement.
- Coordinated the removal of derelict commercial fishing gear with cooperation from fishing industry members, volunteers, and New Hampshire State Parks through organized trap clean-up days funded by the Fishing for Energy Program. This effort resulted in the removal of about 8.5 tons of gear from New Hampshire's coastline in FY2024 and about 3 tons in FY2025.
- Performed 511 survey assignments and 74 at-sea sampling trips, in cooperation with National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), to gather data on catch and effort for saltwater recreational fisheries. During the biennium, Marine Division staff interviewed over 3,000 anglers. In 2023, an estimated 781,514 recreational saltwater fishing trips occurred in New Hampshire and another 607,116 trips occurred in 2024. Atlantic mackerel was the most harvested fish in 2023 and 2024 by recreational harvesters, with over 2 million fish taken in 2023 and 1 million fish taken in 2024.
- Purchased, distributed, and oversaw compliance for 56 cellular-based tracking devices with service packages to federal lobster permit holders required by an addendum to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan.
- Purchased and deployed a passive acoustic monitoring device to detect the presence of large whales. This device was deployed in a location that would allow for continuous monitoring through a grid pattern in coordination with other New England states and NOAA Fisheries.

GREAT BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE (GBNERR)

- Over 13,900 visitors came to the exhibit room at the Great Bay Discovery Center in FY2024 and FY2025.
- Education programs hosted at GBNERR to interpret the natural and cultural history of Great Bay resulted in over 20,000 contact hours with students and young children over the biennium. The programming includes school field trips, summer Bayventure camps, and programming for young children with stories, outdoor exploration, and crafts.
- GBNERR benefited from over 10,700 hours of volunteer time dedicated to education, visitor center, research, land stewardship, training and engagement, and grounds and facility maintenance. Between 70 and 96 volunteers regularly dedicated their time to GBNERR programs.
- In addition to regular volunteers, the Reserve hosted 27 distinct groups (corporate groups, student organizations, service organizations, etc.) for volunteer workdays. The groups varied in size from 6 to 45 individuals and worked at several NHFG properties helping to complete larger projects such as debris removal, invasive species control, and planting native species.
- Staff led three Teacher on the Estuary (TOTE) workshops to give over 35 New Hampshire high school teachers hands-on science and technology curriculum training on topics such as Movement Ecology of Coastal Fisheries, Eelgrass Ecolo-

gy, and Next Generation Science Standards Cross Cutting Concepts.

- GBNERR led 48 workshops and trainings and offered 24 technical assistance initiatives to bring technical information to community leaders and natural resources professionals in the Great Bay watershed focused on conservation planning, wetland resilience, and coastal stewardship. These programs engaged 1,690 participants during the biennium.
- Staff began hosting a biennial event—the Great Bay Research Symposium—which brings together 85 researchers and natural resource managers to share the latest science, spark collaborations, and facilitate the use of monitoring infrastructure to improve research and management of the Great Bay Estuary.
- GBNERR facilitated a large collaborative planning effort to identify and advance projects that will help protect spaces—migration corridors—that will enable salt marshes to expand into adjacent upland as sea levels rise. The project focused on New Hampshire’s 326 miles of tidal shoreline and involved 90 conservation, restoration, and management professionals from 44 organizations. GBNERR is helping to secure funding for several of the priority areas identified by this project.
- Staff installed new exhibits to interpret the harvest of fish and shellfish in the estuary, the habitats of Great Bay, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), the glacial formation of Great Bay, and a saltmarsh sparrow exhibit.
- Improved the Glenn’s Cove Wildlife Management Area in Greenland, renovating a farmhouse to be student researcher and visiting scientist housing and creating a picnic pavilion and new public water access site.
- Research staff led a team of scientists from around the country on a first-of-its-kind study of salt marshes nationally, integrating data across the NERRS to examine how these valuable coastal ecosystems are responding to climate change. This project leveraged the Reserve System’s geographic diversity, nationally coordinated monitoring program, communication networks, technical expertise, and strong record of collaborative research.
- GBNERR is leading a new research project with regional partners, looking at the potential effects of blue crabs, which have recently expanded their northern range into New Hampshire coastal waters. This study is finding that blue crabs are newly distributed all across New Hampshire, with “hot spots” in the warmer waters of Great Bay, while lobster populations appear to be declining in those same waters.
- Supported doctoral-level graduate research through our Davidson Fellowship, focused on understanding how rising ocean temperatures and anadromous fish management through dam restoration can affect Atlantic cod and striped populations. GBNERR also supported six additional interns during the biennium, providing mentoring and guidance on science and education projects at Great Bay.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public Affairs Division

Public Affairs Division

EDUCATION UNIT

- The Education Unit continues to change and adapt to the increasing demand for programs while keeping an eye on the future for what the Department needs from its education programs going forward. In the last biennium a new Strategic Plan, State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), and Big Game Management Plan for the agency were updated and written for the next 10 years of wildlife conservation in the state. These important documents also help guide the work of the Education Unit for the next 10 years. Education staff participated in helping to add education strategies to the SWAP and started meeting about ways to incorporate these new documents' priorities into our education efforts to help implement these plans and educate the public to act on behalf of wildlife.

Conservation Education

- The Urban Wildlife Education Program continued in partnership with the New Hampshire Audubon Society and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Urban Wildlife Education Program provided wildlife education to Manchester School District third graders during the biennium on the topics of habitats, reptiles and amphibians, birds, and mammals. The goal of the program is to introduce children to wildlife, connect them to nature, and spark their curiosity as they explore these topics.
- Seven Durant Grants were received from the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire, securing funds to support the Schoolyard Wildlife Action Grants, purchase supplies to support wildlife learning at Barry Conservation Camp, expansion of the Nature Backpack Program, supplies to support the Urban Wildlife Education Program, publication of the *Wild Times for Kids* educational magazine, and supporting teacher professional development workshops.
- Fish and Wildlife Stewards provided 170 presentations on black bears, bobcats, moose, and brook trout to adult audiences, almost double the number during the previous biennium, reaching 3,425 people. The presentations highlight NH Fish and Game's successful wildlife management efforts funded through the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Acts.
- The Schoolyard Wildlife Action Grants Program provided \$19,671 in partnership with the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the NH Audubon Society, Project Learning Tree, and the New Hampshire Environmental Educators to help support 14 schools with schoolyard projects connecting students to nature and learning in outdoor spaces. These projects included establishing pollinator gardens for native pollinators and Monarch butterflies, integrating wildlife education spaces into the schoolyard, curriculum support, and an interactive nature trail.
- Twenty-five staff-led professional development workshops provided training for 378 educators on how to incorporate New Hampshire wildlife and environmental science into their pre-K through grade 12 classrooms using Project WILD, Below Zero, and other curricula. This is a train-the-trainer program, so one teacher trained provides wildlife education to students for many years to come.



Educators testing how warm "beak and leg feathers" were at a Below Zero: Winter Wildlife Ecology Workshop in Bath, NH in February 2025.



MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public Affairs Division

- The Watershed Education and Wildlife Education programs teamed up starting in January 2025 on a year-long, seasonally focused educator workshop series: Wild in New Hampshire. Fifteen teachers are participating in the program to deepen their content knowledge on wildlife, watersheds, and mapping tools such as ArcGIS. All participants are already connected to NH Fish and Game education programs, and the series is designed to support them in expanding their use of local ecology and data tools in the classroom.
- Fifteen schools and 270 students participated in the Winter Severity Index data collection program to learn how snow depth and temperature affect deer populations in the state.

Hunter Education

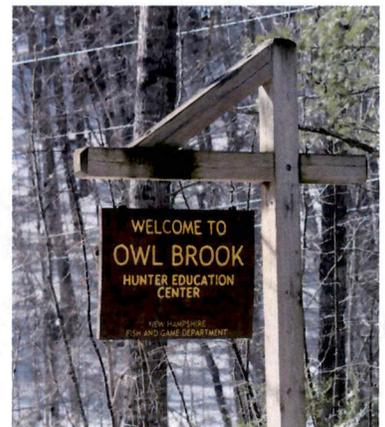
- During the biennium, the Hunter Education Program provided 301 classes, certifying 4,961 students, which is a 12% increase over the previous biennium.
- The Hunter Education Program conducted 5 full-day Learn to Hunt workshops over the biennium, which included 71 attendees.
- The Hunter Education Program provided a week of hunter education each summer of the biennium during which a total of 79 campers were certified to hunt in New Hampshire.
- Five new instructor trainings were held for Hunter Education volunteers. A total of 46 new Hunter Education volunteer instructors completed the training and were added to the pool of approximately 400.
- An additional Hunter Education instructor reached the 60-year volunteer mark, in addition to the three in the previous biennium. A granite bench with his name on it was added to the other three at the Owl Brook Hunter Education Center along the path that leads to the replica trapper cabin.
- An annual inventory and inspection process for all the Department-owned firearms that are utilized for Hunter Education courses was implemented. This annual inspection takes place at the beginning of each calendar year and is conducted by NH Fish and Game staff.
- The Trapper Education program gained 5 new instructors over the biennium.

Archery

- The new Archery Education program hosted 4 trainings during the biennium, teaching 36 individuals how to offer safe and fun archery programs in New Hampshire communities. Archery outreach instructors offered 3 archery events reaching 28 students during the biennium.

Owl Brook Hunter Education Center

- Improvements at Owl Brook included cutting trees at the back of the shotgun range to maintain a safety buffer. Staff also added a backstop wall on the handicap-accessible archery course target to prevent errant arrows from going down range.
- Owl Brook hosted the annual Hunter Education instructor recognition banquet in FY24 and FY25. Approximately 180 people attended each of the 2 years.
- Owl Brook hosted many educational opportunities including multiple shooting



MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public Affairs Division



sports activities, youth hunting skills days, Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) workshops, Learn to Hunt workshops, Hunter Education field days, summer youth programs, winter archery programs, and several high school and middle school groups, as well as local town recreation programs.

- Approximately 150 events (classes, workshops, and programs) were held, and approximately 2,500 people attended. This includes the use of the woodland archery range and practice archery range over the biennium.

Let's Go Fishing

- The Let's Go Fishing (LGF) Program offered 106 free courses for the public and schools during the biennium with instruction on Fly Fishing, Basic Fishing, Ice Fishing, Kayak Fishing, and Fly Tying.
- LGF instructors and staff provided a 1-week session called Fishing Camp at Barry Conservation Camp each of the two summers of the biennium.
- The LGF Program supported 14 outreach events including the NH Interscholastic Athletic Association Bass Fishing Seminars and Fish and Game's Discover Wild New Hampshire Day each year. The Let's Go Fishing Program engaged with approximately 4,500 people during the biennium and partnered with various groups including the YMCA, The Boys and Girls Club, and scouting groups.
- LGF staff held a volunteer recognition and training event for the approximately 110 volunteer fishing instructors each of the 2 years of the biennium.

Discovery Room

- Nature Scapes LLC, The New Hampshire Wildlife Heritage Foundation, Trout Unlimited, and the Meredith Rotary all donated funding and in-kind donations to the Department for improvements to our Discovery Room exhibits and a complete replacement of the Backyard Aquatic Demonstration area and pond in front of our headquarters building. Designs, planning, and funding were done in this biennium with the actual replacement of the water feature and exhibit work to begin in Summer 2025.

Watershed Education

- The Watershed Education Program provided training and support to over 100 schools each year of the biennium, reaching 13,300 students.
- A total of 150 people were trained, from K-12 teachers to homeschool educators and volunteers. Two 4-day Watershed Ecology Institutes for teachers were held each summer of the biennium as part of the trainings offered.
- Twenty-one teacher trainings were held on the topics of macroinvertebrate monitoring and reporting, ArcGIS, Simulating a New Hampshire River System, and Trout in the Classroom.
- Direct field trip support and presentations were provided to 33 participating schools. These consisted of activities such as electrofishing, macroinvertebrate/water-quality sampling, presenting watershed activities with groups, trout release days, and talks given to students. Over 400 students were reached directly through these activities.
- Twenty-seven outreach events were supported by the Watershed Education Program such as the NH Envirothon High School Competition and Fish and Game's



Discover Wild New Hampshire Day. The WEP had contact with over 4,000 people through these events, raising awareness of the program and the importance of healthy fisheries habitat in the state.

Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program

- The Department's Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program (BOW) is co-sponsored by the New Hampshire Wildlife Federation, which continued to help support this important initiative that targets women age 18 or older for workshops teaching outdoor skills associated with hunting and fishing, as well as many other outdoor pursuits.
- During the biennium, 337 women attended Fall, Winter, and Beyond BOW workshops on such topics as fly fishing, ice fishing, wildlife tracking, field dressing big game, archery, kayaking, and outdoor cooking.
- A total of 18 BOW Fall Weekend participants received a scholarship to attend the event over the course of the biennium.
- A new BOW Coordinator was hired in the spring of 2024.

INFORMATION UNIT

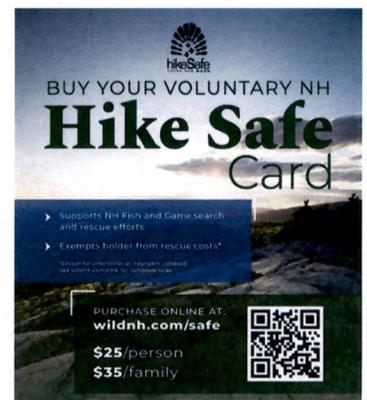
- The Information and Outreach half of Public Affairs has had a busy 2 years with some major events including supporting the Department's hosting of the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conference here in New Hampshire with over 500 participants at the Omni Mt. Washington in Bretton Woods.
- We assisted the Commission with the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan update by editing and designing it.
- Information Unit staff were instrumental in organizing and holding the groundbreaking ceremony for the new New Hampton Fish Hatchery construction project.
- Our work ramping up the promotion of the Hike Safe card program, including having a poster placed in every state DMV office, has resulted in increases in sales of the cards over the biennium. Sales in FY24 were \$372,458.33 and \$419,300.04 in FY25, an increase of 12.6%.

Website, Publications, News, and Merchandise

- The NH Fish and Game Department's mobile-friendly website *wildlife.nh.gov* saw 5,531,776 unique visits over the biennium, a large increase from the previous 2 years. The new and improved website boasts ADA compliance and a better digital experience for constituents thanks to streamlined and more organized site mapping. The website now contains a more efficient 526 pages of information and content, down from over 750 pages before the migration.
- In FY24, 369 press releases were issued by the Public Affairs Division, and 327 were issued in FY25 in various formats, communicating the Department's messages to media outlets across New Hampshire and in Massachusetts to approximately 4,000 subscribers. This represents an approximately 12% increase in the number of followers from the previous biennium.
- These totals also include support of the Law Enforcement Division's search and



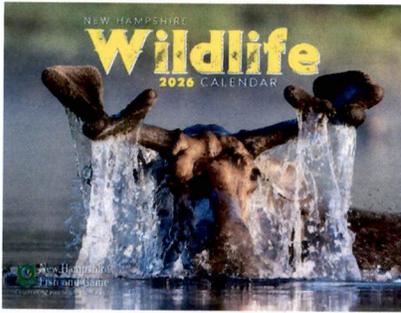
*Becoming an Outdoors Woman
Fall Weekend 2025*



*Hike Safe card program poster
placed in DMV offices.*

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public Affairs Division



2026 NH Wildlife Calendar



2024 Discover Wild NH Day

rescue press releases. An increase in the sales of Hike Safe cards can be attributed in part to improved messaging around the Hike Safe card and website which features the “ten essentials” to always bring on any outdoor adventure.

- Public Affairs Division staff coordinated the Department’s social media and reached 3,291,713 people on Facebook and 253,182 people on Instagram. Followers increased on all platforms. Over the biennium we reached 112,917 followers on Facebook, a 9.5% increase over the biennium, 45,592 followers on Instagram, a 14% increase over the biennium, and 4,300 followers on Twitter/X, a 7% increase.
- The Division sold 8,291 units of merchandise, such as sweatshirts and hats, over the biennium equaling \$142,857.97 in gross sales. This is a decrease in number of units due to problems with selling online and fulfilling orders.
- The Public Affairs Division sold 5,455 copies of the 2024 New Hampshire Wildlife Calendar and 6,000 copies of the 2025 version, representing a sellout. We had an increase in sales over the biennium due to online sales and both wholesale and retail promotion with an emphasis placed on wholesale fundraising opportunities. The calendar raised \$25,131 in 2024 and \$31,890 in 2025 for the agency.
- Our bimonthly *New Hampshire Wildlife Journal* magazine maintained an average of 5,611 subscribers in FY24 and 5,159 in FY25, a decrease from the peak after the pandemic.

Broadcast Media

- The Video Unit and staff produced 155 original content videos over the biennium. Some of this produced content was in the form of YouTube “shorts” (videos under 60 seconds in length) resulting in a growth of over 900 subscribers to the Department’s YouTube channel @NHFishandGame over the biennium, bringing us close to 5,600. Over 8,600 hours of content was viewed on our YouTube channel during the biennium.
- Our show "Outdoor Almanac" is still running on radio stations throughout New Hampshire.
- We published 42 “On the Nature Trail” podcasts, 5 more than the past biennium, with each new podcast averaging over 350 listens per month. This is an increase of over 300% in listens over the previous biennium.

Advertising and Promotion

- One hunting marketing campaign was held which ran for 1 month in the biennium. The 2023 hunting theme was “What’s in your sights?” highlighting hunting opportunities. Traditional outreach was through radio statewide, print, and social media.
- These were years four and five of the enhanced email collection from license buyers. These emails will become a vital component of future Retention and Reactivation efforts.
- Fishing marketing campaigns ran for 4 months in the biennium. In 2023–2024, both campaigns included a traditional radio component and targeted social media ads.
- Adventure talks returned to both live and streaming formats. Two ice-fishing talks were offered. The attendance was not as robust as pre-pandemic levels.
- The Department hosted two Discover Wild New Hampshire Day events in 2024 and 2025 which were very successful with approximately 8,000 visitors each.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public Affairs Division

- Over the biennium, the Department hosted 22 public events drawing over 20,000 attendees. Also during the biennium the Department sent staff to 16 fairs, sporting shows, and other outdoor recreation–associated events.
- The Department held its Shop WILD Saturday event in December 2023 and 2024, offering people a chance to purchase Fish and Game merchandise as gifts, which were very successful and well received. This is now an annual event.

Barry Conservation Camp

- Public Affairs Division staff again managed the Barry Conservation Camp facility, including spring clean-up and building maintenance.
- Camp sessions in 2024 and 2025 had 180 campers.
- Over the biennium, Barry Camp hosted Trout Unlimited's Trout Camp Tier 1 each year.

LANDOWNER RELATIONS PROGRAM

- The Landowner Relations Program actively recruited landowners for the Operation Land Share Program, bringing the total number of private land acres enrolled in the program and open for public access to over 477,000. This is an increase of 9.2% over the previous biennial total. These lands are generously left open and unposted by private landowners for hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.
- Private landowners who keep their land open for public access were provided with free signage and assistance with related mitigation issues through the Landowner Relations Program. Landowners were also made aware of opportunities to partner with the Department and other organizations to improve habitat management and public access to their lands.

WILDLIFE HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

- The Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire, the non-profit partner of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, continued to deliver significant private support to the Department over the biennium. During this biennium, the Foundation awarded \$194,626.79 in grants for 29 Fish and Game projects, an increase of 7 grants and \$27,811.49 over the last biennium.



Campers enjoying the shotgun range at Barry Conservation Camp



**WILDLIFE HERITAGE
FOUNDATION of NH**

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division



White-tailed deer

Wildlife Division

GAME PROGRAM

- The Game Program contracted with the University of New Hampshire Survey Center to quantify residents' opinions on the status and management of big game populations in New Hampshire. A survey invitation was sent to over 30,000 residents of the state, including both members of the general public and license holders. Over 5,000 individuals completed the survey and provided pertinent data which served a significant role in long-term species management planning.
- The Game Management Team revised the New Hampshire Big Game Management Plan, which will guide the management of deer, moose, bear, and turkey for 2026 through 2035. This plan presents the goals, objectives, and management strategies of the Department to conserve and manage big game species over the next 10 years. Previous long-term plans have focused on species-specific population levels. This revised plan included species population goals but added multiple new elements including recognition of the ecological benefits of these species, public support for their management, the role of hunting as a management tool, opportunities to appreciate and utilize big game species, and the protection and conservation of wildlife habitat and sustainable forest management. This revised plan was adopted by the NH Fish and Game Commission on June 17, 2025.
- The Game Management Team completed the Department's season-setting process during winter 2024 and spring 2025 for big and small game species, furbearers, and waterfowl. Season frameworks for all species were evaluated, and recommended changes were implemented through this process. Final rules resulted in increased hunting opportunities in many parts of the state, specifically for deer. Hunting seasons for moose, bear, turkey, small game, and waterfowl, as well as trapping and hunting seasons for furbearers, were modified slightly but remained largely unchanged from previous levels, thereby maintaining a similar level of opportunity and desired harvest impact.
- The Game Program expanded youth hunting opportunities in New Hampshire by adding a youth hunting weekend for pheasants beginning in September 2025. Special youth hunting days had previously been established for deer, turkey, and waterfowl.
- The Game Management Team developed an online registration process for hunters to report furbearers taken by hunting. Starting in 2025, select furbearers (i.e., coyote, fisher, red and gray fox, opossum, skunk, raccoon, mink, muskrat, and weasel) that may be hunted will be required to be reported when taken. This reporting system will allow the Division to collect more comprehensive data on total furbearer harvest and hunter effort. Collection of this data will aid in tracking abundance of these species and will enhance the overall management of furbearers in New Hampshire.

Population and Harvest Levels by Species

- The 2024 total deer harvest was 12,277 and represented the state's twelfth-highest harvest on record going back to 1922. Deer numbers throughout New Hampshire continue to be strong, with all wildlife management units (WMUs) being at or above population objectives set in the New Hampshire Game Management Plan. This has resulted in increased opportunity for harvesting antlerless deer in recent

years as we work to reduce or maintain populations at current objectives.

- Moose population abundance indices varied throughout the state with a generally stable population in the Connecticut Lakes and North Regions and a slowly decreasing population in the White Mountains, Central, Southwest, and Southeast Regions. Winter ticks, brainworm, lack of young forest, and development are the primary factors limiting the population. In accordance with the 2016–2025 Game Management Plan, conservative hunting opportunity is offered in management regions that are above the moose density cut-off level. For 2025, moose hunting permits will be issued in the Connecticut Lakes, North, and Southeast Regions with a total of 35 either-sex permits.
- Increased bear hunting opportunities have continued throughout the biennium as the Department works to meet population objectives in the Game Management Plan. In 2024, bear hunters achieved the highest harvest (1,195 bears) in the state's history. This represented a 24% increase over the preceding 5-year average (961 bears) and a 40% increase from the previous year (712 bears). The 2024 season also marked the first time that hunters had the opportunity to harvest an additional bear in the White Mountains Region, with over 1,200 hunters purchasing an additional bear tag. Season length, specifically for still hunting, has continued to expand in select regions. In 2023, the Department increased options for hunters to report harvested bears by establishing 13 registration stations at private businesses around the state. This change has been met favorably by hunters, with over 50% of harvested bears being registered by newly established stations in 2024.
- The 2025 spring turkey season harvest was 4,845 and represented a modest rebound from the year prior (4,562). The impacts of a particularly poor nesting season in 2023 were reflected in subsequent spring harvest totals, with a reduction in jake and 2-year-old gobbler abundance in 2024 and 2025, respectively. Since 2019, when a two-gobbler spring season bag limit was first implemented in select WMUs, the total spring harvest has increased over historic (pre-2019) averages with 21–24% of successful hunters now harvesting a second spring bird annually.
- During this biennium, 10,000 pheasants were stocked at 64 sites in 43 towns, resulting in an average of 156 birds released at each site. Larger sites such as flood control and wildlife management areas were stocked with the most birds.

Research

- Since 2022, the Wildlife Division has contributed to a multi-state mallard migration ecology and demographic study to determine the cause of the long-term decline of the mallard subpopulation in the northeastern United States. Staff continue to trap and attach GPS/GSM backpacks to hen mallards over the course of the project.
- An important moose research project with the University of New Hampshire (UNH) initiated in the summer of 2022 will conclude in 2025. Drones equipped with color and thermal sensors as well as trail cameras were used to measure moose abundance. Drone surveys were conducted in northern New Hampshire, and trail cameras collected data statewide. This research was needed because the current method for monitoring moose abundance, the deer hunter survey, was developed in 2000 and needs periodic comparison with more intensive abundance surveys to validate its accuracy.



Moose



Turkey

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division



Marten

- In collaboration with the moose research project described above, a furbearer monitoring effort with UNH initiated in summer 2022 will conclude in 2025. Trail cameras collected statewide occurrence and abundance data on furbearers. This research was needed because the current method for monitoring furbearer abundance, catch per unit effort, and observation data may be affected by decreased trapper effort and has not been previously validated in New Hampshire for accuracy.
- Through a contract with UNH, a statewide study focused on the survival and cause-specific mortality of fisher was initiated in 2024. This research will provide managers with an estimate of fisher survival across multiple regions of the state, identify causes of mortality, measure health parameters, and quantify habitat use and dispersal. This research is critical for managers to identify factors affecting fisher abundance and population trends.

Wildlife Health Monitoring

- Cases of avian pox and Lymphoproliferative Disease Virus (LPDV) in turkeys remain low. A total of two and seven reports were received during the 2024 Summer Brood Survey and the 2025 Winter Flock Survey, respectively. While these viruses have been widely detected, relatively few turkeys seem to have been seriously affected.
- The Wildlife Division, working in partnership with US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services, collected a total of 1,210 samples from captured ducks during the biennium to aid nationwide avian influenza surveillance efforts.
- The Department continued to test for chronic wasting disease in deer, with 8,981 deer sampled since 2002. To date, no deer in New Hampshire have tested positive.
- Moose health was monitored by pathologic evaluation of samples from euthanized sick/fresh dead moose and screening blood from hunter-killed and euthanized sick moose for brainworm antibodies. Select organ samples were collected from 27 euthanized sick/fresh dead moose in 2023 and 2024 and submitted to the NH Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for pathologic evaluation; assessment is pending. Blood samples were collected from 13 euthanized sick moose and 18 hunter-killed moose in 2023 and 2024 and will be sent to the University of Tennessee for screening.

Trend Data

- Department biologists captured and leg banded 1,113 ducks and 1,313 resident Canada geese throughout the state as part of ongoing Atlantic Flyway waterfowl monitoring.
- Biologists and select, dedicated volunteers monitored ruffed grouse and turkeys via 43 survey routes throughout New Hampshire during spring 2025. Additionally, woodcock surveys were conducted during the same time period on 32 routes, including 13 routes in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Data collected annually from these survey routes serve as an index to abundance and allow managers to monitor population trends of these species over time. Results from spring surveys and small game hunter surveys are published annually in the Small Game Summary on the Department website.



Canada goose

- Since 1997, biologists have conducted annual mast surveys to monitor the distribution and abundance of important foods consumed by wildlife (e.g., acorns, beechnuts, apples, various soft fruits). During 2023 and 2024, biologists submitted 414 mast observations. Mast survey data are used to interpret harvest results, predict harvest impacts, provide evidence-based insight into human-wildlife conflict levels, and better understand the overall species ecology. This long-term data set is extremely popular with the public, both hunters and non-hunters, managers, as well as researchers from various groups and universities.
- In a continuing effort to assess bobcat population dynamics in New Hampshire, bobcat carcasses continue to be collected. These are necropsied and provide information on sex, age, weight, and productivity.

Animal Damage Control Program

- The Animal Damage Control Program is a cooperative initiative entering its 39th year between the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services. This unique mitigation program combines state and federal expertise, resources, and personnel to resolve wildlife conflicts in the Granite State.
- Working collectively, the Animal Damage Control and Bear Program responded to more than 1,074 requests for human–bear conflict assistance during this biennium, leading to the distribution of 152 educational pamphlets, 148 electric fence setups, 106 motion sensor alarms, 37 pyrotechnic launchers, and 9 bear-resistant garbage containers. Over 73% of all requests for assistance involved either backyard poultry, unsecured garbage, or bird feeders. Both agencies have expanded outreach to poultry producers, municipalities, and campgrounds to alleviate conflicts with bears. Assistance is provided through recommendations, evaluations, educational materials, site visits, formal damage assessments, loan of wildlife mitigation equipment, direct control, the distribution of information leaflets, information on the Department website, social media, videos, door hangers, and when applicable, wildlife depredation permits and compensation for bear damage to commercial agriculture. The popularity of backyard poultry and bee keeping operations in recent years has increased the need for technical and operational response by this program, particularly when bear damage is involved.
- Since it was initiated in 1986, the program has responded to over 54,000 requests for assistance. Staff also participated in monitoring for disease concerns such as chronic wasting disease, avian influenza, tularemia, SARS-CoV-2, and LPDV (turkey pox virus) by gathering biological samples for testing.
- Additionally, staff assisted with state and federal recovery efforts for threatened and endangered species, such as piping plovers and upland sandpipers.

NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM

New Hampshire Fish and Game's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, established in 1988, is the steward for the state's nongame wildlife—species not hunted, fished, or trapped. Through wildlife monitoring and management, plus outreach and education, the Nongame Program works to protect over 400 species of mammals,



Black bear

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division



Blanding's turtle

birds, reptiles, and amphibians, as well as thousands of insects and other invertebrates. The program works in cooperation with other New Hampshire agencies and organizations to develop and implement effective conservation strategies to protect and enhance this diverse group of wildlife.

- The Nongame Program, with support of numerous partners and the public, completed a draft revision of the NH Wildlife Action Plan.
 - The draft NH Wildlife Action Plan includes assessments for 138 wildlife species of greatest conservation need and 28 key habitat types.
 - As a mechanism to capture public and partner input for the revision of the Plan, staff worked with the University of New Hampshire to launch a web-based survey which was completed by over 1,200 participants from 212 New Hampshire towns and cities.
 - NH Fish and Game also worked with the University of New Hampshire to hold seven small focus group meetings around specific topic areas.
- Submitted annual reports to the Conservation License Plate Advisory Committee. Since 1997, funding from the Conservation License Plate Program (a.k.a., Moose Plate) has provided critical support for the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program in carrying out its mission to serve as the steward for New Hampshire's nongame wildlife.
- The Nongame Program successfully raised more than \$100,000 in private donations each year of the biennium through a series of funding campaigns. As a result, the Nongame Program exceeded the requirement necessary to receive \$100,000 in matching state general funds.

Species Recovery

- Biologists in the Nongame Program provided technical assistance to the public and private landowners to benefit the recovery of bats and coordinate with volunteers to conduct surveys.
- Recovery efforts for the New England cottontail continued. Surveys were conducted to determine the presence of the species in suitable habitat. A captive breeding facility at the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge was managed to enhance cottontail productivity. A rabbit reporting website was maintained to gather information on the distribution of rabbits in New Hampshire, and hundreds of reports were received.
- In partnership with the Shoals Marine Laboratory and the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR), biologists continued to monitor and successfully manage a seabird restoration program on the Isles of Shoals. During 2024, 3,069 nesting pairs of common terns (state threatened) and 153 pairs of nesting Roseate terns (state and federally endangered) were documented through standardized monitoring.
- Nongame Program biologists continued to monitor and successfully manage piping plover and least tern populations on New Hampshire's sandy beaches. Fish and Game staff continued to coordinate with the Seabrook Department of Public Works, Hampton Department of Public Works, and NH Parks and Recreation to



Piping plover

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division

manage beach habitat for both people and wildlife. The Fish and Game Piping Plover Monitor engaged beachgoers daily to explain the plover conservation efforts.

- In partnership with NH Audubon, Nongame staff continued monitoring and management for peregrine falcon (state threatened) and bald eagle (removed from state threatened list during 2017).
- Biologists surveyed Blanding's (state endangered), spotted (state threatened), wood (special concern), and box turtles (state endangered) in New Hampshire to determine the spatial extent and health of populations. Nongame biologists also partnered with the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Services to implement a Working Lands for Wildlife Program for turtles, a program where landowners can receive financial assistance to voluntarily assist with the implementation of priority turtle actions.
- Biologists continued restoration and recovery efforts for Karner blue butterflies (federally and state endangered) including raising and releasing butterflies in a captive rearing laboratory and performing habitat management annually.
- The Nongame Program evaluated the habitat needs of the White Mountain fritillary (state endangered) and the White Mountain arctic (state threatened), species of butterflies only known to occur on Mount Washington.
- NH Fish and Game worked with a small group of conservation partners and volunteers to continue advancing the collection of data on butterfly species in the state. The team organized several training sessions from January through June 2024. In total, the 6 webinars had 1,365 registrations from 521 individual participants.

Technical Assistance and Outreach

- Published eight issues of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program's nationally recognized *Wildlines* newsletter. Each newsletter was distributed to over 3,000 individuals. *Wildlines* issues are also posted on the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department website and advertised via social media following the release of each issue, further enhancing the publication's reach.
- Provided technical assistance to partners and the public regarding the NH Wildlife Action Plan and associated habitat maps. Maps include both comprehensive statewide land cover and habitats ranked by ecological condition. NH Wildlife Action Plan maps are used extensively by communities, land trusts, and other conservation partners as an important tool in guiding land-use decisions.
- The Taking Action for Wildlife Team, consisting of members from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, and the Association of Conservation Commissions, provided technical assistance via workshops and meetings on conservation planning, wildlife and wildlife habitats, and community engagement with a focus on implementing the NH Wildlife Action Plan. The Taking Action for Wildlife Team completed a technical assistance training program entitled the Wildlife Webinar Series. The series included 4 online trainings and 395 unique participants from 165 communities.
- The Taking Action for Wildlife Team initiated the development of a new brochure in the Focus on Wildlife brochure series focused on Swifts & Swallows in New Hampshire. These birds are aerial insectivores, a group of species with significant



A Karner blue butterfly

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division



Barn swallow

population declines that would benefit from increased awareness and conservation actions. This brochure will be added to a series of print resources that are used by numerous groups/agencies to convey the importance of swifts and swallows to private landowners, communities, and conservation organizations in New Hampshire.

- Biologists provided wildlife-related outreach at a number of public events including Discover WILD New Hampshire Day, the Hopkinton State Fair, TurtleFest, and targeted presentations to towns and other conservation partners.

Environmental Review

- Biologists reviewed and provided technical assistance on projects seeking state permits from the NH Department of Environmental Services and provided input in selecting mitigation projects. Reviews focused on potential impacts to endangered and threatened wildlife. During the biennium, a total of 7,473 projects were checked for the presence of rare species using the NH Natural Heritage Bureau's data check tool. Following initial screening, 1,098 projects (approximately 14.6%) that were identified as having potential impacts to protected wildlife were reviewed by NH Fish and Game. Projects were completed, on average, in fewer than 30 Department review days.
- The NH Fish and Game Department created and maintained a project tracking system and updated guidance and outreach materials on the Department's website pertaining to the Environmental Review process. Updates included additional resources links, a summary of the steps involved in the review process, frequently asked questions (FAQs), a weekly summary of the status of each project, and a dashboard of project inputs and review timeframes.
- Biologists represented NH Fish and Game on the NH Aquatic Resources Mitigation Fund Project Selection Committee administered by the NH Department of Environmental Services.
- Staff administered the NH Fish and Game Department's Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Mitigation Fund and submitted annual reports to the State Legislature.

Wildlife Habitat Program

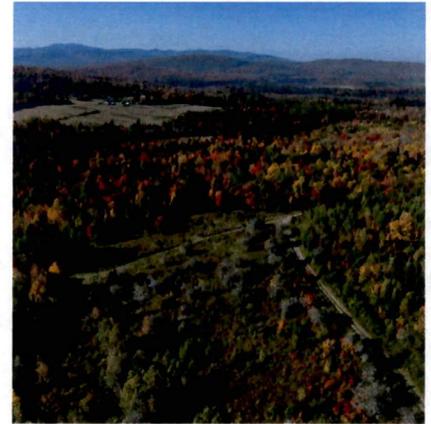
- Because native wildlife and their habitats are vital to the health of New Hampshire's landscape and character, the Wildlife Habitat Program conserves and improves wildlife habitats on public and privately owned lands. It also ensures that the public has access to these lands for their enjoyment. The Wildlife Habitat Program manages over 90,000 acres of wildlife management areas (WMAs) and conservation easement areas, and provides technical and financial assistance on tens of thousands of acres of private lands to help those landowners improve habitats on their property.
- Provided nearly \$80,000 in financial assistance to 46 landowners. Over 1,700 acres of habitat were improved including maintaining young forest and field habitat, creating or maintaining wildlife openings, releasing apple trees, and developing wildlife-focused management plans.
- Provided wildlife habitat advice to 120 landowners or their managers on forest

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division

management projects, affecting nearly 224,998 acres.

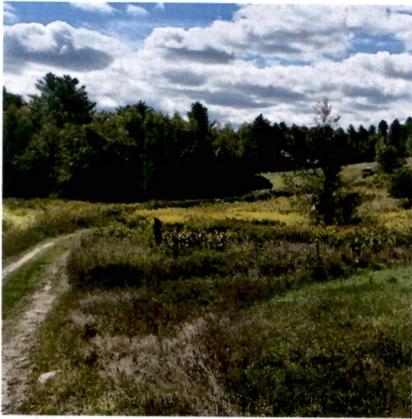
- Provided over 200 hours of service to the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and the State Conservation Committee. Department staff reviewed 88 applications for funding, mostly associated with land conservation. Fifty-eight applications were awarded, resulting in over 48,000 acres being conserved. Staff worked to ensure that awarded projects conserved significant wildlife habitats and are open for public access including hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.
- Over the last 2 years, the Program acquired four properties in fee or conservation easement totaling 2,250 acres, which were added to our statewide wildlife management area (WMA) system. Funds for acquisitions were obtained through Federal Aid in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) grants, donations, mitigation, or other sources of funding. These properties included:
 - **Maidstone Bends Conservation Easement, Northumberland** - Along the shores of the Connecticut and Upper Ammonoosuc Rivers lies farmland spanning 750 acres in the Town of Northumberland. The Wildlife Habitat Program partnered with The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire to conserve this property, which offers diverse wildlife habitats including farmland, woods, wetlands, and expansive floodplains—those areas along the river that flood each spring, filtering water and providing important wildlife habitat. Fish and Game now holds an easement on 358 acres of the property that was not already under an easement. The closing occurred on July 13, 2023.
 - **Glover Farm WMA, Dummer** - The Wildlife Habitat Program teamed up with The Conservation Fund to conserve this 820-acre property. The sale closed in October 2023, creating the Glover Farm Wildlife Management Area. This property harbors diverse habitats including active hayfields, old field and orchard, a white cedar swamp, marshes, and extensive northern hardwood forest. These diverse habitats support equally diverse wildlife including moose, deer, bear, bobolink, marsh wren, and many other species. It is a popular spot among local hunters for grouse, woodcock, and snowshoe hare, as well as deer. We plan on maintaining those diverse habitats for the benefit of wildlife and the public.
 - **Carter Brook WMA, Springfield** - With support from local residents and the Town of Springfield, 837 acres of land were purchased to create the Carter Brook WMA. Two separate properties were acquired to protect wildlife habitat, aquatic and upland resources, and to provide the public with recreational opportunities such as hunting, trapping, and wildlife watching. The local community rallied to conserve this property, providing assistance and funding to make this project successful. The total project costs were over \$1.3 million, which involved funding from a generous anonymous donor, a bargain sale from Jennifer Lyn Shaw, one of the former landowners, and US Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Restoration Grant Program funding derived from taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. The property's size affords the opportunity for habitat improvement through forest management and will benefit diverse wildlife populations.



The new 820-acre Glover Farm WMA in Dummer, NH, conserved with the help of The Conservation Fund.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division



The 240-acre Pinchard WMA in Mont Vernon generously donated by the estate of Roger and Joanne Pinchard.



Marking boundaries helps visitors know the extent of Fish and Game's property ownerships. Over 56 miles of boundary maintenance was completed over the last biennium.

- **Pinchard WMA, Mont Vernon** - The Department accepted a generous donation of 240 acres from the estate of Roger and Joanne Pinchard in June 2024. In 2013, the Pinchards were engaged in estate planning and reached out to several conservation organizations to inquire about donating their land, including Fish and Game. After evaluating their options, they determined the Department best aligned with their values and how they wanted to see their land managed. A pledge agreement was signed by both parties and made part of their estate. The Pinchards have since passed away and their estate manager reached out last year to initiate donation procedures.
- Wildlife habitat was enhanced on WMAs through various means to support a diversity of wildlife from bees to birds to bears:
 - Six forest management projects were completed to enhance young forest habitat, increase acorn production, or otherwise improve wildlife food and cover. In addition to the habitat benefits, over \$550,000 in revenue was generated.
 - Fields were mowed on 28 state properties to maintain 247 acres of habitat for wild turkey, deer, grassland birds, and other wildlife.
 - Staff promoted shrubland and young forest habitat to benefit American woodcock, ruffed grouse, and several species of songbirds on four properties encompassing 27.5 acres. Invasive plant control operations were carried out on three additional properties covering over 30 acres. Staff participated in a prescribed fire at Blue Job State Forest to promote blueberry barrens on over 20 acres. A forest resource inventory was completed on the entire 25,000-acre CT Lakes Natural Area in Pittsburg. This was an update of the 2004 inventory.
- Maintaining roads, parking areas, gates, signs, and other property infrastructure is imperative for a good visitor experience and to maintain wildlife habitat. To that end, 20 signs were repaired, repainted, or created new and installed. Additionally, 17 properties with signs, gates, and parking areas were cleaned up, vegetation was brushed back, and 14 gates were scraped and painted on 13 properties. A new parking area was installed on the north end of the Ellis Hatch, Jr. WMA in Brookfield. Road stabilization work including installation of waterbars was done at the Pearly Lake WMA in Rindge. Planning and permitting was completed to remove an eroded dike at the William B. Ruger, Jr. South WMA in Croydon and Newport. Staff completed extensive access-road repairs including the replacement or installation of 5 stream crossings at the Lower Shaker WMA in Enfield. Planning was completed regarding Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding secured to repair 17 miles of access road damaged by a July 2024 storm at the CT Lakes Natural Area in Pittsburg.
- Maintenance was contracted out or completed on 56 miles of WMA boundaries using contractors and in-house staff. Boundaries need to be maintained every 10–15 years to ensure that visitors to the properties and our abutters know the extent of our ownerships, and to ensure habitat management projects stay within our bounds.
- Through a contract with the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, the Program helped fund the training of 46 New Hampshire Coverts Project

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Wildlife Division

volunteers over the biennium; they joined another 485 Coverts volunteers active in the state, who together contributed over 28,700 hours of service on behalf of wildlife habitat in their communities (valued at over \$929,000) over the 2 years.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT	# ACRES MANAGED
RESOURCE INVENTORY	6,232 ACRES
GRASSLANDS/OLD FIELDS MANAGEMENT	1,435 ACRES
WETLAND ENHANCEMENT	574 ACRES
TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT	1,471 ACRES
EARLY SUCCESSIONAL MANAGEMENT	410 ACRES
HARDWOOD MANAGEMENT	641 ACRES
SOFTWOOD MANAGEMENT	428 ACRES
LAND CONSERVATION	11,191 ACRES

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



WILDLIFE HERITAGE
FOUNDATION of NH



The Forever Locked moose display

Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire

Fish and Game's Nonprofit Partner

The Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization, continues to have a significant positive impact on Department programs, services, and activities as an official nonprofit partner of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, pursuant to RSA 206:33c and grant outcome reports.

Established in 2006, the Foundation has awarded hundreds of grants, amounting to more than \$1.4 million, to NH Fish and Game, focusing on critical Department needs that are underfunded or unfunded and on programs benefiting future generations. The Foundation helps fund essential education, conservation, wildlife, fisheries, and law enforcement programs across the Department.

During this biennium, the Foundation awarded \$194,626.79 in grants for 29 Fish and Game programs—an increase of 7 grants and \$27,811.49 over the last biennium. As examples, grants helped fund phase 1 and 2 upgrades to the Discovery Room educational exhibits at Fish and Game headquarters, the *Wild Times for Kids* elementary school publication, bear immobilization equipment for the Wildlife Division, equipment and program support for the Great Bay Discovery Center, OHRV/snowmobile trailers for Conservation Officers, and field equipment such as a night vision monocular and Viper Vortex binoculars.

The Foundation is the presenting sponsor of Fish and Game's annual Discover WILD New Hampshire Day and funds the maintenance, construction, and operations of Barry Conservation Camp. It continues to play an important role in supporting the Law Enforcement Division's Conservation Canine unit by paying for training, food, medical care, and equipment, including a recent \$20,000 grant to outfit a new K-9 cruiser.

The Foundation's Forever Locked moose display, now celebrating its 20th anniversary as one of New Hampshire's iconic public education assets, travels the state to promote New Hampshire's great outdoor traditions, especially among children, teens, and families.

The Foundation generates contributed income through fundraising campaigns, grant proposals, individual major gifts, corporate donors, memorial gifts, Board of Directors contributions, the Friends Program, special events, and the annual Moose Permit Auction. It accepts general and targeted cash donations, annuities, and endowments, which are tax-deductible in most cases. For more information, visit www.nhwildlifeheritage.org.

2024 Session

The following bills of interest to Fish and Game were enacted into law for the 2024 Legislative session:

- **HB 1116 – Title: Relative to certain firearms to be used for taking of game.** Removes the reference to “lever-action carbine” and clarifies that straight-walled pistol cartridges of .357 caliber or greater are allowed for use in rifles anywhere hunting is restricted to handgun or pistol. Chapter 108; Effective date 1/1/25.
- **HB 1121 – Title: Relative to creating certain wetlands permit exemptions after a natural disaster or flooding event.** Allows property owners to remove woody debris and blockages from watercourses after a flood. Chapter 219; Effective date 9/17/24.
- **HB 1138-FN – Title: Equalizing the fines for operating an OHRV with a driver's license suspended and operating a snowmobile with a driver's license suspended.** Makes the fines the same for operating either an OHRV or a snowmobile with a suspended license. Chapter 62; Effective 1/1/25.
- **HB 1143 – Title: Including control of cyanobacteria blooms under the New Hampshire clean lakes program.** Mandates that DES consult with Fish and Game before using any chemical or physical applications to control cyanobacteria blooms. Chapter 114; Effective 9/1/24.
- **HB 1197 – Title: Relative to criminal background checks and relative to insurance coverage for intrauterine insemination.** Authorizes Fish and Game to collect fingerprints and a criminal record release from guide license applicants to obtain a records check from the FBI. Chapter 366; Effective 10/22/24.
- **HB 1304-FN-L – Title: Relative to vessel registration and boat fee decals.** Renames the boat registration fee a boat decal fee, to remove the discrepancy with federal law. Chapter 125; Effective 1/1/25.
- **HB 1424 – Title: Relative to pistols permitted for taking game.** Simplifies the allowed pistols for taking deer by removing the list and just stating “.327 Federal Magnum and any caliber .357 Magnum and greater”. Chapter 134; Effective 1/1/25.
- **HB 1494 – Title: Relative to OHRVs.** Establishes a form to be signed that permits operating an agricultural/industrial utility vehicle on a way. It also mandates Fish and Game to maintain a calendar of events for unregistered snowmobiles and OHRVs and establishes that the fees collected from the permits for such events will come to Fish and Game. Chapter 200; Effective 1/1/25.
- **HB 1636 – Title: Relative to prohibitions on carrying a loaded firearm on an OHRV or snowmobile.** Allows for the carrying of unloaded revolvers as well as pistols on OHRVs and snowmobiles. Chapter 210; Effective 6/17/22.
- **SB 310 – Title: Relative to bear registration, federal duck stamps, and the transport of out of state lobsters and crabs.** Allows for bear registration stations; accepts digital confirmation of the purchase of a duck stamp in lieu of the physical stamp; and establishes a non-commercial landing license for lobsters and crabs. Chapter 276; Effective 9/24/24.
- **SB 542 – Title: Creating a committee to study fish and game department funding and partnerships.** Establishes a committee to study ways Fish and Game could generate funds or collaborate with other agencies to that end. Chapter 302; Effective 7/26/24.
- **SB 544 – Title: Replacing the deer seal system with a confirmation number system.** Replaces the deer seal system with an on-line registration and digital confirmation number. Chapter 303. Effective 9/24/24.

2025 Session

The following bills of interest to the Fish and Game Department were enacted into law for the 2025 Legislative session:

- **HB 87 – Title: Prohibiting the posting of land not owned by the poster.** Prohibits anyone that is not the landowner from erecting any sign or poster on the property of another and establishes a fine therefore. Chapter 136; Effective 1/1/26.
- **HB 127 – Title: Extending the closing date of the OHRV trails on the Connecticut Lakes headwaters working forest property.** Allows such OHRV trails to remain open until the second Monday in October. Chapter 261; Effective 7/31/25.
- **HB 211-FN – Title: Relative to the use of air rifles for hunting game.** Clarifies the definition of “air rifle” and allows for their use in the taking of wildlife. This bill also permits the creation of rules for an air rifle hunting tag. Chapter 21; Effective 7/13/25.
- **HB 404 – Title: Relative to information on the hike safe card.** Includes “domestic partner” and their minor children in the definition of “family”. Chapter 148; Effective 8/30/25.
- **HB 647-FN – Title: Relative to the fee for a newborn lifetime hunting and fishing license.** Removes the fee for such a license from statute and allows it to be established in rules. Chapter 78; Effective 7/1/25.
- **HB 655-FN – Title: Relative to fish and game violations, permits, and licenses.** Increases the restitution for illegal hunting and makes it mandatory; lengthens the license suspension time for a third hunting violation and makes such violation a Class A misdemeanor; removes the perpetuity of a crossbow permit for persons with a disability; and adds Atlantic menhaden to the list of reciprocity species for non-

LEGISLATION

residents. Chapter 202; Effective 9/13/25.

- **SB 31-FN – Title: Establishing an apprentice guides license.** Establishes an apprentice guide license and allows for the fees to be set in rules. Chapter 113; Effective 1/1/26.
- **SB 32 – Title: Relative to the fish and game commission.** Allows for hearing notices to be posted digitally; incorporates federal law that allows shooting injured waterfowl in specified areas; allows fisheries habitat fees to be set in rules; and repeals the Connecticut River Atlantic salmon commission. Chapter 215; Effective 9/13/25.
- **SB 51 – Title: Relative to decal fees and the statewide public boat access program.** Clarifies that boat decal fees shall be designated for sole use by the public boat access program. Chapter 84; Effective 8/8/25.
- **SB 107-FN – Title: Enabling the state treasurer to invest certain fish and game funds.** Allows for non-game species funds to be invested and any interest accrued to be credited back to the non-game species account. Chapter 88; Effective 8/9/25.
- **SB 196-FN – Title: Relative to the exemption from competitive bidding requirements for certain state agency projects.** Increases the value of projects exempt from DAS's bidding process to \$1 million. Chapter 100; Effective 8/16/25.
- **SB 235 – Title: Enabling funds from the Pitman-Robertson Act to be spent by the fish and game department on threatened and endangered species in New Hampshire and allowing the fish and game department to collect donations at sites approved by the executive director.** Allows the Department to expend Pitman-Robertson Act fund on threatened or endangered species and permits the solicitation and collection of donation of funds around the state. Chapter 132; Effective 8/23/25.

FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE AND SPORT FISH RESTORATION PROGRAM



Together, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs have transformed the landscape and immeasurably improved the conditions and prospects for New Hampshire's wildlife.

KEEPING OUR WILDLIFE – AND OUR TRADITIONS – HEALTHY

Purchases of fishing tackle, firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, and motorboat fuels, along with license sales, help fund sport fish and wildlife restoration in New Hampshire. This provides opportunities for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-associated recreation.

NOT SO LONG AGO...

In the middle of the 19th century in New Hampshire, numbers of many wildlife species were dwindling or gone altogether because of unregulated hunting and loss of habitat. Conservation efforts of the time were few—and frequently misguided or scientifically questionable—but leadership was beginning to understand that investing in wildlife and habitat pays great dividends.

A UNIQUE SOLUTION

The Pittman–Robertson Act, or Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, was passed in 1937. It was designed to counteract the wildlife crisis by providing local funding for wildlife management research, the selection, restoration, rehabilitation, and improvement of wildlife habitat, and public use and benefit related to the same.

In 1950, the Dingle–Johnson Act, or Sport Fish Restoration Act, was created to provide similar management, conservation, and restoration improvements for fisheries. Together, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs (WSFR) have transformed the landscape and immeasurably improved the conditions and prospects for New Hampshire's wildlife. In short, both acts encourage a scientific approach toward managing—and restoring—fish and wildlife.

USER-PAY, USER-BENEFIT

“Every time an American hunter buys a gun or ammunition, he chips in to improve his sport,” said the author of a 10-year report on federal wildlife restoration released in 1949. It's just as true today; WSFR programs are funded by revenues collected from the manufacturers of sporting arms, handguns, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing rods, reels, lures, and other fishing gear. Motorboat and small engine fuel taxes also help fund the system. The money is paid back to New Hampshire Fish and Game—and wildlife agencies in the other U.S. states and territories—through approved federal grants to support specific wildlife and sportfish restoration projects.

MEETING THE PUBLIC'S WILDLIFE NEEDS

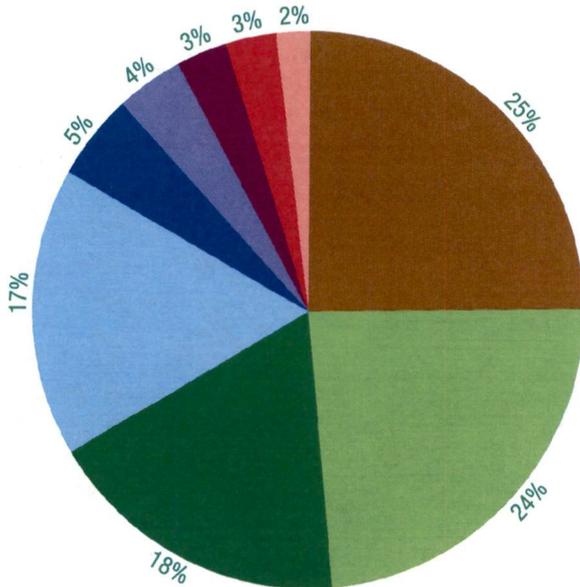
With the support of WSFR, deer, bear, wild turkeys, and countless other species are now prospering. New Hampshire Fish and Game's scientific research and management give species a solid chance to re-establish healthy populations, while at the same time improving habitats for wildlife and people. Along the way, WSFR helps Fish and Game meet the public's need for wildlife resources by improving boating access, providing aquatic education and outreach, maintaining a quality hunter education program, and funding myriad related projects.

New Hampshire's hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers—including visitors to the state—can thank WSFR's creators for starting a system that has protected our wildlife and our outdoor traditions through the decades.

A COMPLEX FUNDING PICTURE

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department uses revenue from fishing and hunting license fees, federal funds, state general funds, and other sources to accomplish its broad mission to serve the people and wildlife of New Hampshire.

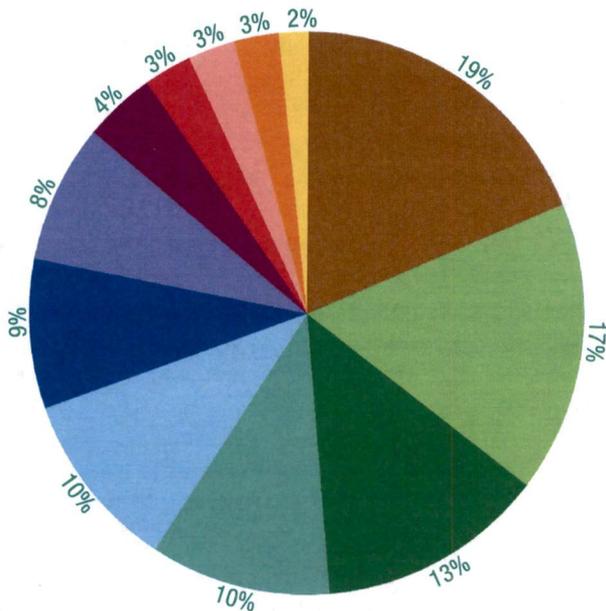
WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM...



TOTAL REVENUES* (FY 2025): \$49,274,226

- License Fee Revenues - 25%
- Federal Funds - 24%
- OHRV Funds - 18%
- ARPA/GOFERR Funding - 17%
- Other Agency Income - 5%
- Unrefunded Gas Tax Transfers (Marine & OHRV) - 4%
- General Funds - 3%
- Other Miscellaneous Unrestricted Revenues - 3%
- Dedicated License Revenue - 2%

WHERE THE MONEY GOES...



TOTAL EXPENDITURES (FY 2025): \$49,274,226

- Law Enforcement, Search & Rescue, OHRV - 19%
- ARPA/GOFERR Funding - 17%
- OHRV Transfer to DNCR - 13%
- Marine Fisheries & Estuarine Reserve - 10%
- Inland Fisheries Management & Hatcheries - 10%
- Wildlife and Habitat Management - 9%
- Administration, Finance & Fleet Management - 8%
- Public Affairs & Conservation Education - 4%
- Maintenance, Construction & Public Boat Access - 3%
- Non-Game Program & Conservation License Plate - 3%
- Office of Information Technology - 3%
- Retirees' Health Insurance - 2%

***License Fee Revenue:** Includes all resident and nonresident fishing and hunting licenses received for Fiscal Year 2025. The actual amount of license revenue received for the fiscal year was \$10,544,233.

Other Miscellaneous Unrestricted Revenues: Includes court and license agent fines and penalties, sales of surplus property and vehicles, miscellaneous sales, and interest earnings.

Total Expenditures of the Fish and Game Fund for Fiscal Year 2025 per year-end Monthly Statement of Appropriation by Office is \$50,164,517. Included within this amount is \$890,291 of interfund expenditure reimbursements. The total also includes \$8,258,090 in American Rescue Plan expenses and revenues. The net result of expenditures for fiscal year 2025 is \$41,016,136.

Other Agency Income: \$5 boat surcharge – \$516,245; \$1 Search and Rescue surcharge on boat, OHRV, and snowmobile registrations and the Hike Safe card – \$629,612; Nongame donations and Conservation License Plate funds – \$805,633; Wildlife Heritage Foundation Grant funds – \$81,343; timber sales revenue – \$262,329; other miscellaneous income – \$60,200.

Federal Funds: Sport Fish Restoration Act (Dingell-Johnson and the Wallop-Breaux Amendment) for inland fisheries management, boat access, and aquatic resources education – \$2,758,405; Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) for wildlife management and hunter education – \$3,059,126; State Wildlife Grants – \$388,379; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for marine fisheries management, the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve program, and marine law enforcement – \$3,876,897; indirect grant costs – \$1,124,913; other miscellaneous federal revenues – \$457,050.

