

BUILDING LANDOWNER RELATIONS

Hunting and fishing are sports set deep in New Hampshire tradition, but with more than 80% of the state's land in private ownership, these activities are highly dependent on maintaining public access to private land. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2001 National Survey of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Associated Recreation, more than three-fourths of all hunting activity in the state occurs on private land.

"Access to private lands for hunting and fishing is a privilege we have because of the generosity of New Hampshire landowners," said Chuck Miner, the Landowner and Constituent Relations Administrator at Fish and Game. Miner oversees the Landowner Relations Program established by the Department during the biennium.


"More and more land is being placed off limits to hunters and anglers," Miner said. "Loss of access is a significant reason why some people in New Hampshire are giving up hunting." To counter this trend, the Landowner Relations program focuses on maintaining and increasing opportunities for hunting and fishing on private lands by creating a strong working partnership between Fish and Game, landowners, hunters and anglers.

Miner has been on the road, talking to Fish and Game clubs and landowner groups and community organizations about these issues and listening to

concerns of each. The goal, of course, is to get these groups working together.

What is he hearing? Liability is a key issue of concern for landowners, Miner says, and they are often surprised to learn that they are protected by State law from liability associated with passive use of their land (such as hunting or fishing) under the "Duty of Care" statute, RSA 212:34.

Landowners also simply want to know who is using their property. To address this concern, Miner will be developing a "Landowner Courtesy Card" that hunters can give to landowners, providing them with the hunter's name, address, phone number, vehicle and hunting license information and how to report game law violations. The card will be part of a "Hunter-Landowner Relations Tool Kit" intended to help hunters build skills for interacting with landowners. Miner also encourages sporting groups to get more involved with their local communities, to become better known and build good will.

Landowners continue to play a critical role in providing access for hunting and angling, as well as the habitat that supports New Hampshire's wildlife populations. By establishing a Landowner Relations Program, Fish and Game is working to improve this important relationship. Reach the Landowner Relations Program by contacting Chuck Miner at (603) 271-3511 or email cminer@wildlife.state.nh.us. 



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The Landowner Relations program aims to create a strong working partnership between Fish and Game, landowners, hunters and anglers.

Office of the Executive Director

The Fish and Game Executive Director has general supervision and control of all activities, functions and employees of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and enforces all provisions of state laws relating to fish, wildlife and marine resources. The Executive Director is nominated by the Commission and appointed by the Governor and Executive Council. Each candidate must be a competent administrator and have knowledge of, and experience in, the requirements for the protection, conservation and restoration of the fish and wildlife resources of the state. The Executive Director serves for a term of four years.

The **Office of the Executive Director** oversees coordination of federal aid, coordination of rules and legislation, budget development and oversight and personnel administration.

Within the Director's office, a newly created **Land Resources Bureau** handles land acquisition, land stewardship and habitat protection efforts conducted through the use of

various land conservation strategies. This Bureau coordinates all aspects of the Department's land protection program across all divisions and is the lead and primary contact regarding land issues. Land Resources Bureau staff are responsible for acquiring land to conserve fish and wildlife habitat, secure public access to land and public waters and to ensure that Fish and Game policies relating to land use and development are consistently communicated and applied.

Also within the Director's office, a new **Landowner Relations Program** has been developed and implemented, acknowledging that landowners play a critical role both in providing access to private lands for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities, and in providing the habitat that supports New Hampshire wildlife populations. By establishing a working partnership between Fish and Game and landowners, this program creates a mechanism for addressing issues that landowners face.