New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission
11 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301

29 January 2016

Dear Fish and Game Commission,

I am writing on behalf of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire to express our concerns regarding and opposition to the proposed bobcat season. We are a statewide conservation organization of more than 5,000 members, many of whom hunt and fish.

We recognize that the proposed bobcat harvest is conservative and well-distributed geographically to minimize genetic impacts on the population. While available evidence suggests that the current bobcat population can withstand a modest harvest, there is no evidence to suggest that a harvest is needed to manage or will in any way benefit the current population. On the contrary, at a time when the Department’s ability to control white-tailed deer populations is increasingly limited in the more heavily developed areas of the State, encouraging populations of native predators, including bobcats, could help to decrease deer populations where current densities are over target.

Our opposition to the proposed season also rests heavily on concern for the future of the Fish and Game Department (“NHFG” or “the Department”). Our organization has worked closely with NHFG for many decades on a wide range of research and conservation efforts. We are acutely aware of the important work NHFG staff are doing to ensure the future of the state’s fish, reptile, amphibian, bird, and mammal populations. We are very concerned that implementing a bobcat season will jeopardize that work both economically and politically. The costs associated with managing the proposed season are projected to be three to four times the anticipated revenue. At a time when the Department is depending on $600,000 from the General Fund to maintain current obligations and activities, incurring additional costs to initiate a new program seems politically and economically ill-advised.

The broad and vocal public opposition to this proposal jeopardizes the future of General Fund support and the future of donations to the various NHFG funds and programs. We have heard from multiple large landowners threatening to post their lands, thus penalizing the many sportsmen and women who have no desire to hunt or trap bobcats. There is also a legal risk to consider. While the designated Lynx Protection Zone covers the area in which lynx are most likely to occur, dispersing individuals from New Hampshire, Maine or Canadian breeding populations may travel outside this area and
become vulnerable to incidental take. Such take would not only violate the federal 
Endangered Species Act, but will invite litigation from opponents of the bobcat season. 

We believe that the Department stands to lose much more than it stands to gain if this 
proposal is implemented. We urge you to place the long-term welfare of the New 
Hampshire Fish and Game Department and the wildlife resources of the State, as well as 
the interests of the majority of the public, above the short-term desires of a relatively 
small constituency.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Bartlett
President