



New Hampshire Hunting and Fishing Threatened

Sportsmen have been experiencing climate change for decades. Experiencing nature through its seasons, watching animals, and monitoring the weather, hunters and anglers were the first American conservationists. In states like New Hampshire, with diverse wildlife and beautiful natural landscape, the effects of rising temperature and unpredictable weather events are already making an impact. Coal-burning power plants, fossil fuel extraction, and deforestation are just some of the human activities stimulating the warming of our climate, a process that has been rapidly accelerating in the last 50 years.¹

“We just can’t count on a NH winter to provide us with business like we used to.”

Jason McKenzie’s family has run the Suds N’ Soda convenience store and sports shop for over half a century, but the warming winters are hurting business. “We’ve had to adjust our inventory since winter and ice-fishing went away five years ago,” McKenzie says. The recent mild winters have prevented historically safe ice-fishing areas from freezing and the kept fishermen away. This has resulted in two-thirds of McKenzie’s inventory left un-purchased. The next year, wary ice-fishermen were reluctant to buy any equipment, worrying the trend of unseasonable warmth would continue.



This extreme weather, characterized by mild fall and winter seasons, also impacts local duck hunters. Warm winters interfere with the normal migration patterns of ducks and geese to New Hampshire during open season. McKenzie’s business is going to have to change with the temperature. “I have learned my lesson the last few years. I now plan on ordering only what merchandise I can afford to sell if we don’t have a winter.”



“Climate change is very obvious on Great Bay”.

Seacoast guide, Dick Pinney, has been observing similar trends on the shores of Great Bay over the last 50 years. “Our ice comes later and melts sooner and some years hardly freezes at all.” This affects not only the fishing industry, but local wildlife as well. “Our waterfowl populations, especially in October and November as well as in the spring, have dwindled considerably.”

Longtime lobsterman, Dave O’Hern, also fishes Great Bay and has witnessed dramatic changes over the past decade. The Mother’s Day Flood of 2007 released so much freshwater into Great Bay that lobster traps were flooded, killing all of the catch. Increasing temperature changes have resulted in the lobsters abandoning Great Bay for the sea. As a boy, O’Hern remembers skating on solid ice ponds before Christmas, but now says, “Recently, ice does not form safe ice until well into the New Year, if at all.”

Pittsburg resident and Trouts Unlimited project leader, Joe Norton, has also experienced unprecedented severe weather in northern New Hampshire. This April, heavy flooding washed out numerous roads throughout the region. Before repairs could be made, flooding again destroyed roads critical for fisherman access to wild trout streams. By the time summer came and the flooded roads were once again passable, Norton found that the unusually hot temperatures had raised the stream temperatures to the 80’s and the trout had moved away downstream to deeper and cooler water, preventing any trout fishing that year.

“The season started off real warm again this year. Too warm.”

Buck Mercier has been working as a moose guide since moose-hunting was restored in New Hampshire 23 years ago. This fall’s hunting season has been typical of the past several – bad. The unseasonably warm temperatures prevent the moose from moving; feeding at night and avoiding hunters entirely. Mercier has also noticed an increasing threat to the moose population by ticks. Mild winters and wet, rainy springs cause tick numbers to soar, and moose must rub their skin against tree bark to try and dislodge the blood-sucking ticks. This year, Mercier found a startling increase in the number of trees with moose rubbings. He also reported finding five dead moose over spring, with a dozen more reported further north, and all likely killed by an overabundance of ticks.



From New Hampshire’s Canadian border to the Atlantic Coast, climate change is impacting everything from our fish and wildlife to our businesses that depend on those resources. The tourist areas that rely significantly on sustainable species are already being hit the hardest. Hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching is a \$500 million business in New Hampshire each year. The economy and culture of our largely rural state are at risk with a rapidly changing environment.

¹ Global Climate Change: Causes. *National Aeronautics and Space Administration*. Climate. [nasa.gov/causes/](https://www.nasa.gov/causes/)