

FINAL MINUTES

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)

July 27, 2023

DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103

1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

Meeting held in person

MEMBERS:

Present: Wayne Petersen, Tim Flanagan, Bill Brumback, Matthew Sisk, Kevin Powers, David Small, Mark Mello

Absent: None

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Russ Hopping

Absent: Andy Finton

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Eve Schlüter, Mike Nelson, Karro Frost, Ernest Foster, Dr. John Organ

OTHERS:

Present: Sharl Heller, Frank Mand, Rane Duncan

– The meeting was called to order at 1:30 P.M. –

1. Approval of the April Minutes

Bill Brumback motioned that the April meeting minutes be accepted, Tim Flanagan seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Chair's Comments – Mark Mello

- It was noted that this meeting is focused solely on a presentation of the 2024 proposed MESA listing changes. Discussion on its content will be made at future meetings.
- Mark also noted that nearly 3,000 species of moths have now been identified in Massachusetts.

3. Board Member's Comments – Matthew Sisk

- Matt introduced two F&W Board members that were present at this meeting: Ernie Foster and Dr. John Organ.
- Matt noted an excellent presentation at the last Board Business Meeting on Forests as Climate Solutions by Kurt Gaertner, the EEA Assistant Secretary for Environmental Policy.

4. **NHESP Report & Assistant Director's Report – Eve Schlüter**

Eve noted the following information:

- \$250K award from USFWS to work on implementation of conservation plans for MESA-listed and at-risk turtles
- America the Beautiful Challenge grant received last year will be starting; MassWildlife (along with conservation partners) submitted a proposal for work within the NEAFWA priority area of Appalachian highlands and stream. The proposed projects will have a focus on listed species and habitats with greatest conservation need.
- GIS Manager position change with the current BioMap Outreach Specialist (Alec Kaisand) to assume the role now that Tara Boswell has left.
- Environmental Reviewer position to be filled shortly.
- Sarah Maier (Information Manager) is leaving, and Eve will be looking to back fill her position.
- 2024 budget is still in conference (\$1.3M current allocation) but \$1.5M is proposed in Senate conference committee proposal.
- Two handouts provided: Freshwater Mussels of Massachusetts and a flyer for the Run for Wildlife.
- Upcoming event (Run for Wildlife) announced for Sep 24th, which is a 5K and 10K trail race and a 1-mile kids fun run with proceeds going to the Endangered Species Fund.
- Manomet Inc in Plymouth will be commemorating the Kathleen S Anderson Nature Trail on their property in Plymouth on Sep 16th. Kathleen (Betty) is now deceased but was a former member and chairperson of the NHESAC. She was also the founding director of the Manomet Bird Observatory, which is now Manomet Inc.
- A minor planet (asteroid #1991P12) was named after Dr. Thomas French (retired Asst Dir of MassWildlife NHESP). Congratulations Tom!

5. ***Proposed Changes to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act List for 2024*** – NHESP staff and presented by Mike Nelson.

- Mike gave a thorough overview of the proposed changes and indicated that the supporting information will subsequently be made available to the Advisory Committee members.
- Last update to the MESA List was 2020. Species are listed either as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern.
- 432 species are currently listed including 173 animals and 259 plants.
- Mike discussed the MESA List change process and anticipated schedule.
- The proposed list changes are summarized as follows:
 - Vertebrates (1 – Delist, 3 – Add to List, 0 – Status Change)
 - Invertebrate (0 – Delist, 5 – Add to List, 0 – Status Change)
 - Plants (1 – Delist, 15 – Add to List, 2 – Status Change)
 - Total of 27 changes
- Mike then proceeded to review each proposed change with AC members sometimes asking for further clarifications.
- Finally, given the amount of material to review a motion was made and adopted for the committee to hold a virtual meeting on Sep 14th to review as many of the proposed status changes as possible. Any subsequent reviews can be done at the next regularly scheduled NHESAC meeting on Oct 12th.

6. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Wayne Petersen – Wayne commented on a current Mountain Plover sighting in Centerville, MA. The only other documented sighting of this species in MA was a 1917 specimen. (<https://thegriffin.co/a-pilgrimage-to-long-beach-cape-cod-the-rare-sight-of-the-mountain-plover/>)

Bill Brumback – No comment

Tim Flanagan – No comment

Dave Small – No comment

Kevin Powers – Kevin discussed his recent (July) experience on southern Stellwagen Bank where he encountered a humpback whale calf entangled in lobster gear. The whale's mother was in close attendance. He noted that there have been three humpback calves entangled near Cape Cod this summer.

Andy Finton – Absent

Russ Hopping – No comment

Motion to adjourn by Dave Small, Seconded by Kevin Powers
– The meeting adjourned at 3:38 P.M. –

Drafted by: Kevin Powers
Submitted by: Kevin Powers