

FINAL MINUTES

**Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee
(NHESAC)**

September 14, 2017
DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

MEMBERS:

Present: Mark Mello, Thomas Rawinski, Wayne Petersen, Joseph Larson

Absent: Gwilym Jones, Jennifer Ryan, Kathleen Anderson

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Dave Small, Kevin Powers, Timothy Flanagan, Andy Finton, William Brumback

Absent: Karen Searcy, Bryan Windmiller, Mark Pokras

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Jon Regosin, Tom French, Mike Nelson, Eve Schluter, Jack Buckley, Marion Larson

OTHERS:

– The meeting was called to order at 1:34 p.m. –

1. Approval of May Minutes

Joe Larson motioned that the May minutes be accepted, Tom Rawinski seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Chair's Comments

As Kathleen Anderson was absent, Mark Mello, acting in her place, commented that the extensive collection of moths, presently at the Lloyd Center for the Environment, will be going to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. A synoptic collection will be retained at the Lloyd Center.

3. Board Member's Comments – Joseph Larson

Dr. Larson commented on the July and August Board meetings. The July meeting was held in Plymouth at the Plymouth Wildlands Trust headquarters.

- The Division's open house event was very successful, attracting 2,000 people.
- George Peterson's retirement as Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game was announced, and new Commissioner Ron Amidon introduced.
- The budget is intact, with no line items added or vetoed; funding for continued Piping Plover management was secured.

- An unexpected gift of \$338K from an individual to the Fish and Game Fund was received.
- Director Buckley discussed recent interactions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and mentioned that the Division's policy on dogs on Wildlife Management Areas was under review.
- Dr. Van Roo described a meeting involving bird banders and local bird clubs.
- Jason Zimmer gave an excellent presentation, updating the Board on happenings in the Southeast District.

The August meeting was held in Dalton.

- Director Buckley mentioned a pending hearing on ca. 20 wildlife-related bills before the legislature.
- Mike Huguenin, formerly Assistant Director of Operations, is now Assistant Director of Wildlife.
- The Board received an update of Western District happenings.

4. NHESP Report – Jon Regosin

- Grassland restoration and management actions are reaping benefits at Crane WMA, Bolton Flats and in Southwick. Grasshopper Sparrows and Vesper Sparrows have increased, and an Eastern Meadowlark nested in Southwick.
- Jon and Amanda Weise met with the Plymouth Wildlands Trust to plan a Division-funded outreach program intended to address invasive plant issues at coastal plain ponds.
- Jon visited the Concord Pine Barrens in NH and will learn from NH how best to manage the federally threatened Small Whorled Pogonia orchid.
- The new Priority Habitat Atlas has finally been released – the next one is due in four years.
- Habitat management at Bird Island is proceeding with a cost-share grant from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Field season for most biologists is winding down.
- Regional conservation needs were addressed at a recent gathering of the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee in Maryland.
- A prescribed burn was conducted in Southwick, assisted by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service burn boss.
- Brent Powers left the Division to study moose at UNH; applicants are being reviewed to replace him as a Review Biologist.

5. Assistant Director's Report – Tom French

- Tom brought attention to the many news clips in members' packets. A recent paper in *Ecotoxicology* documented impacts to birds of prey from rodenticide exposure.
- Other news clips discussed involved Right Whale and seabird mortality, EOE's open space and recreation plan, freshwater mussel conservation, shark sightings, unusual bird sighting on Cape Cod and an injured Bald Eagle restored to health.

6. Discussion of when federally listed species should be formally included on the Massachusetts list of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern species – Mike Nelson, Tom French, and Jon Regosin

- This presentation posed several intriguing questions. A handout, “*Examples of species that are federally listed, or being considered for listing, that occur, or may occur in Massachusetts*” was used to stimulate discussion.
- Certain federally listed species pose regulatory challenges in Massachusetts, such as the Rusty-patch Bumble Bee, which is likely threatened more by disease issues rather than by habitat issues, and is probably already extirpated from the state.
- The federally threatened Red Knot occurs in Massachusetts only during migration, so it is an unusual species for state listing.
- The extent of regulatory protection afforded to reintroduced/repatriated populations of federally listed species was discussed. Mike discussed at length the Karner Blue Butterfly, which has been the focus of recovery efforts in New Hampshire. No verified records of the species are known from Massachusetts, which would likely prevent its introduction into the Commonwealth.

7. An update on the status of the official E, T, and SC species in regulation, including needed revisions to scientific and common names, organization of the list, the species listing process document, and preparations for the next listing review cycle – Mike Nelson, Tom French, and Jon Regosin

- A handout, “*Updates to the Massachusetts List of Endangered, Threatened, & Special Concern Species*”, dated March 10, 2017, was discussed. These most recent list changes took several years to be finalized, which points to the need to begin work on future list changes soon.

8. Member’s and Associate Member’s Comments

Wayne Petersen – The 3rd “*State of Birds*” report has been completed and is available on the web. Wayne’s “*Field Guide to the Birds of Massachusetts*” has been published and will be available to the public at Mass Audubon’s recently acquired Tidmarsh Farms property in October, 2017.

Timothy Flanagan – The 3rd Annual Berkshire Natural History Conference will be held on October 14, 2017. Registration and additional information can be found at www.Berkshire.edu

Andy Finton – A partnership with National Fish & Wildlife and local conservation groups has been entered for the protection and restoration of floodplain forest at Fannie Stebbins Conservation Area in Longmeadow, MA.

– The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Thomas J. Rawinski, Secretary