



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Fred Winthrop, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/ DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Mark Tisa/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/ Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Information and Education, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Captain Tony Kabir/OLE, Lt. Col. Brian Perrin/ OLE; PUBLIC: Dave Morin, Robert Verzome, John Simpson, David Vance, Bill Lively, T. A. Gagnon Jr., Michael Donnelly, Danny Donnelly, Brian Davis, Mike Wood, Craig Cortis, Rosemary Charron, John Kellstrand, Tim Wright, Robert V. Brophy, Drew Shaheen, Julia Barrone, Paige Hebert, Steven LaRivee, Paul Johnson

DATE: April 10, 2018

LOCATION: Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Field Headquarters
Westborough, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the April meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 2:05 P.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Winthrop to accept the minutes from the March 2018 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo abstained. The motion passed with six members in favor.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that Massachusetts Sportsmen's Council President John Kellstrand had requested that he be allowed to present an award to Director Buckley that the Director was unable to accept at the Council's annual banquet earlier in the spring. Mr. Kellstrand stated that the Council had voted its Lifetime Achievement Award to Director Jack Buckley for his long, distinguished career in conservation in the Commonwealth and presented Director Buckley with the award.

Chair Larson stated that he had drafted a letter in consultation with the Director and his staff in response to an inquiry into the status of the timber rattlesnake project. He had caused the letter to be emailed to the Board members for review and comment, and asked the Board members to endorse the letter. Secretary Booth moved that the letter be approved and sent to the inquirer; Mr. Sears seconded the motion. Vice Chair Roche offered his thanks to the staff that had worked on the project and commended its efforts. The vote in favor was unanimous.

The Chair reported that a subcommittee of the Board composed of himself, Secretary Booth, and Mr. Fred Winthrop had been formed to find and appoint a new Director. He explained the process of creating the supporting documents for the job posting and the steps involved in developing the interview questions, setting up and conducting the interviews, etc., in detail. He said there were

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questions about the scope of the search, and that it was decided that it should be a nationwide search, or at least that the posting should be shared widely as opposed to being only internal. Chair Larson stressed that the decision to post nationally was not at all a reflection on the perceived quality of agency and statewide potential candidates. He noted that final documents from the process would be given to the Director's Assistant in Westborough, who would process them for the Human Resources Officer.

At the request of the Chair, Ms. Booth made a motion to appoint Mark Tisa as Acting Director, effective May 1, 2018, to serve until a new Director is appointed. Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion. Director Buckley was asked to estimate how long the process might take and he posited that the Board should have candidates to interview before the end of May, so could conceivably be ready to appoint at the June meeting and the official appointment could be made in July. Chair Larson stated that the search will remain open until the position is filled. There being no more discussion, the vote in favor was unanimous.

The Chair reported that there had been an interesting meeting at the Quabbin earlier in the month regarding hunting access. The Chair stated that he did not but that Vice Chair Roche had attended. Mr. Roche stated that he had been informed shortly before the meeting that changes to access to the Quabbin and the outlying properties as well were being proposed, and both hunting and fishing would be affected. Commissioner Roy explained at the meeting that he had raised the questions because he did not know what the rules and changes would entail. Commissioner Amidon stated that Commissioner Roy had thought about making many changes to the access. The Commissioner looked into it and spoke to Secretary Beaton about it. He did not attend in person, but reported that five legislators had attended. Most worrisome to Commissioner Amidon was the potential elimination of the very popular 1-day fishing license. He reported that the DCR had thought to limit harassment of loons and other wildlife on the reservoir, but Commissioner Amidon stated that he had suggested working with the Massachusetts Environmental Police to investigate complaints and enforce wildlife protections.

Director Buckley stated that he thought it ironic that Commissioner Roy was taking time to limit hunting access when he would do much better to address DCR lands in Eastern Massachusetts that are closed to hunting and improve hunter access and species management there.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon stated that it had been a busy month. He reported that he had heard from a lot of sportsmen who are happy with the dog-leash regulations, and that he is very pleased. He attended the Mahar Regional game supper, where the students did an excellent job, as usual. He had assisted the Director and Deputy Director with the ceremony for the freshwater Sport Fishing Awards, where MassWildlife had a packed room and lots of happy families. The Commissioner reported that he had attended the Worcester County annual banquet where the League recognized Central Wildlife District Supervisor Bill Davis and his approaching retirement. During the month he also visited the Muddy Brook WMA and lunched on Prescott Peninsula.

Commissioner Amidon also reported that he had met with Southeast Wildlife district Supervisor Jason Zimmer and I&E Chief Marion Larson at the MMR (Massachusetts Military Reservation) to discuss the idea of a Big MOE 'East,' to replicate the popular introductory outdoor exposition held every year at the Hamilton Rod and Gun Club in Sturbridge. While there, he reported that the meeting toured an area that would be perfect to host an event. He stated that both the Plymouth and Barnstable county leagues are interested in helping and, within the next 2 months, the parties should have a solid plan. He reported that he had attended a meeting of a coalition of county leagues at the Marlborough Rod and Gun, which is trying to establish an alliance of conservation organizations across the state. The group

had adopted the name of the Massachusetts Conservation Alliance, and picked a priority of passing the crossbow bill.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that MassWildlife's 2016 Annual Report was included in the Board's meeting packets. The Director offered his thanks to the Board for the chance it gave him to serve.

Old Business

Species Management on USFWS Refuges (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported that there have been a number of meetings with Chris Dyer, and that MassWildlife staff had the opportunity to meet briefly with the national Director. In his opinion, there is a real struggle within the federal agency and the refuges in particular are very resistant to being open to hunting, fishing, and trapping.

The Director was asked about the likelihood of the passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act in the present term; he reported that there is a lot of support but that it's an election year, so most people don't expect anything to happen on it this year.

New Business

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

Associate Director of Administration Kris McCarthy submitted the following personnel report for the Board's consideration and vote:

New Hire

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Megan Elizabeth Cruz	Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician III	McLaughlin Hatchery (Belchertown)

Vice Chair Roche moved acceptance of the report, Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Director Buckley briefed the Board on the schedule for the day, stating that the first hearing would be held at 3:00; it would begin with a presentation, then open to accept oral public comments. After the hearing closed, staff would provide an analysis of the written comments received before the hearing, then ask the Board for a vote on the proposed regulations.

At the request of the Director, it being very close to the time of the scheduled public hearing, Vice Chair Roche moved to suspend the agenda item of 'Wood Turtle Conservation' until after the public hearing so that there would be no interruption, and to take a brief 10-minute recess until 3:00 p.m.; Secretary Booth seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting recessed.

The meeting resumed after the public hearing and vote, when Director Buckley introduced Dr. Michael Jones, the State Herpetologist.

Wood Turtle Conservation (Michael Jones)

State Herpetologist Dr. Michael Jones reported on the cooperative Conservation Plan for the Wood Turtle in the Northeastern United States. He reported that over the past 10 years, the Northeastern state fish and wildlife agencies have developed and implemented cooperative conservation plans for select at-risk turtles and snakes, funded primarily through Competitive State Wildlife Grants (CSWG) and Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) Grants. He state that MassWildlife has led the Northeastern state

wildlife agencies to develop a strategic Wood Turtle conservation plan designed to ensure the persistence of functional, ecologically viable, and regionally significant populations, based on the best available population, landscape, and genetic data. He explained in detail why Massachusetts chose to work with adjacent states in conservation planning for rare turtles, examining the economies of scale, the great statistical power in larger datasets, the value of partner support, and the success of other conservation efforts that were led by state agency associations. Dr. Jones discussed the genetic variability, life and natural history, distribution, and study of wood turtles; he also explained the standardized protocol used to collect the data and the pooled analyses that were done to understand and apply the data to conservation efforts to estimate population, understand recruitment and survival, and the species genetics over a large landscape scale.

After a number of questions from the Board, the Chair and other members thanked Dr. Jones and congratulated him on the quality of the work and of his presentation.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Tony Kabir reported that the Large Animal Response Team had just before the meeting wrapped up a LART mission with a suburban deer in Brockton. He reported that the teams are not always successful relocating such animals, but this one worked out well. He also reported a large number of bear encounters throughout the western and central part of the state. The Captain reported a significant uptick in the number of red-eared sliders being brought into the state from the south, primarily for the Asian food trade. Some of the animals are quite large, and the concern is about possible releases into state waters, where the sliders are able to survive and reproduce, potentially crowding out native turtles.

Lt. Col. Brian Perrin was also present; Director Buckley thanked him for attending and for his cooperation over the years.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's April meeting wasn't scheduled until the Thursday of that week.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the May Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected May 16, 2018, at 1:00 p.m., at the Stationery Factory; 63 Flansburg Ave., Dalton.

Member's Comments

Mr. Winthrop, Dr. Van Roo, Vice Chair Roche, and Secretary Booth reported no comment.

Mr. Foster reported that he had heard from many of his constituents regarding the waterfowl regulations and would have liked to have had the written comments to consider earlier. He also advocated for opening Wampatuck State Park to hunting.

Mr. Sears reported that he had attended a meeting in Bernardston regarding a North Berkshire and Franklin County collaborative effort to help area businesses better coordinate outdoor activities. He noted that it was a good discussion, and that there were pluses and minuses to some of the uses; so, for example, ORVs are not allowed on MassWildlife properties and other areas, but some trails use could benefit from the collaborative's promotional efforts. He also reported that the Berkshire County League's annual banquet would be held on April 21 at 5:30 p.m., and that George Wislocki (formerly executive director of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council) and Tom Tynning (Berkshire Community College) would both be honored for their conservation efforts at the banquet.

Mr. Sears also reiterated that he sees huge interest in the topics discussed at the Board's meetings, the recent presentations on whip-poor-wills and box turtles, in particular – so he was making another pitch for having a way to share the information/presentations the Board learns from each month. Vice Chair Roche asked whether the information could end up on social media. Deputy Director Tisa reported that at the Ruffed Grouse Society banquet the previous week, several people who are not hunters commented to him specifically on the quality of MassWildlife's Facebook page, which they said was one of best they've seen from a conservation organization.

A motion was made by Secretary Booth to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Chief of Wildlife Lands MacDonnell presented nine proposed acquisitions, which were each reviewed and all unanimously approved by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board in its April meeting packets

Agenda

Draft March meeting minutes for review

MassWildlife's 2016 Annual Report

"Recovering America's Wildlife Act: Bill to Reshape Conservation Funding Gets Second Turn in Congress," by Caroline E. Murphy; *The Wildlife Professional*, March/April 2018.

Personnel Report

Copies of the hearing notice and the proposed regulations for the public hearings

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2018)

Documentation for the executive session