



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, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/ Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/ Finance and Administration, Tom French/Assistant Director/NHESP, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/ Fisheries, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Information and Education, Elizabeth Wroblecka/Chief/ Wildlife Lands, Lynn Harper/Habitat Protection Specialist, Christy Edwards /Director of Land Protection/ DFG, Major David Loos/OLE; PUBLIC: Keith Fritze, Matt DiBona, Josh Round, Dave Morin, Stan Andriski, Jim Wallace

DATE: March 14, 2019

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

Chair Larson opened the March meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 10:00 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Sears to accept the minutes from the February meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson commented that the Board had received some documents in its packets at the last meeting. The USFWS has created the opportunity to establish cooperative agreements with state agencies and other entities. He reported that those documents were provided as background for his report on the meeting he had attended with the USFWS, Director Tisa, and Vice Chair Roche. He stated that his objective was to open communications and to identify points of opportunity to work with the USFWS personnel and have some ability to not only provide input on management of rare species and hunting and fishing opportunities but also to have some direct responsibility and ability to take a leading role. He stated that he thinks the Board should take an active role in the development of any cooperative agreement. Vice Chair Roche suggested that the Board follow the staff's lead in its communications with Service staff. Deputy Director Regosin reported that he and Assistant Director for Wildlife Huguenin had a meeting scheduled with the regional refuge director the day after the Board meeting, so they would know what the communication level and the larger situation is very soon.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon was not able to be present so he had provided his comments in writing. The Chair advised the Board that the document was in its meeting packets.

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Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that he and his staff had just returned from the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources conference in Denver and that it was a very productive series of meetings. He stressed the leading role Massachusetts staff is taking in R3 [recruitment, retention, and reengagement of license-holders] and that Massachusetts is receiving national accolades for its efforts. The Director reported that a number of Directors had requested presentations to their governing boards from Outreach and Marketing Specialist Nicole McSweeney, because they were so impressed with the results of Massachusetts' campaigns.

The Director talked about the work he and his staff are doing regarding the relevancy of the work of state fish and wildlife agencies to the general public. He reported that a policy with tactical suggestions was generated at the North American, and he will be developing specific guidance for Massachusetts with staff and would return to the Board with more detailed plans in the near future.

Director Tisa also reported that he had been given an interesting assignment by the AFWA [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies], to develop an online platform for presenting Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson project highlights from various states around the country. AFWA has asked the Director to work more closely with industry in that regard, and will be attending the AFWA Business Summit in Utah in the summer, to build a closer relationship with industry to help them better understand how the excise taxes that are levied at the business level are used by states for conservation.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major David Loos gave the Board the highlights of the most recent tally of statistics on wildlife and other OLE calls for service.

Major Loos told the Board about a recent post on the OLE Facebook page, with photos and commentary on a coyote that had gotten its head stuck in a residential railing. He stated that they got some great pictures before officers were able to free it. He also reported that an OHV [off-highway vehicle] DUI case investigated by Sgt. Bill Woytych had been successfully prosecuted.

The Major stated that there have been issues recently about requests to OLE for moving or relocating problem wildlife. The Major stated that the OLE policy is to only entertain moving deer, bear, or moose, and the Office has reaffirmed that policy, including among its own staff.

The Chair thanked Major Loos for attending the meeting and for his report.

Turkey Review (David Scarpitti)

Turkey and Upland Game Biologist David Scarpitti presented the Board with a brief review of current turkey hunting opportunity in the state, the applicability of regulations versus statute, the regulatory review process, and trends in reported spring turkey harvest. He then provided a summary of the turkey population status statewide and the spring season hunting options currently available to hunters. Mr. Scarpitti then outlined the current Youth season regulations, and reported that the staff's proposed regulation change to enhance opportunities for youth is to increase hunting hours on the Youth day to begin one half-hour before sunrise and end at 5:00 p.m. Staff is also proposing to enable 12-14-year-old Youth turkey permit holders to use their unfilled permits for fall hunting as well as spring, which would expand youth hunting opportunity while eliminating existing barriers to adult mentorship. Turning to the fall season, Mr. Scarpitti reviewed the fall season structure and the trends in reported fall turkey harvest, and discussed it in the context of the increasing use of archery equipment in hunting turkey.

In summary form, the staff recommendations for proposed changes to the Wild Turkey hunting regulations are as follows:

- Increase the daily bag limit to 2 turkeys per day, both for the Youth Day and during the spring season for all hunters
- Extend hunting hours on Youth Day to 5:00 p.m.
- Enable 1 unfilled 12-14-year-old Youth turkey permit to be used during the fall hunting season
- Expand fall season, with archery equipment only, to overlap the entire archery deer season
- Increase annual bag limit to 2 in the spring, and 1 in the fall
- Remove the restriction on shot size for turkey hunting

After a brief clarifying discussion of the recommendations, there was a detailed discussion of the recommendation regarding removing the current shot-size limitation. Vice Chair Roche moved that the Board send the first five proposed changes [as above] to a public hearing. Dr. Van Roo seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

After a further discussion, Dr. Van Roo moved that a proposal amending the regulation to restricting shot size to No. 4 and smaller be sent to public hearing; Mr. Sears seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous. Dr. Van Roo asked that the staff investigate for later discussion whether there is any data on the number and/or severity of hunting accidents relative to larger shot sizes.

National Wild Turkey Federation, Massachusetts Chapter, National Recognition Award (Mark Tisa)

Director Tisa introduced Keith Fritze, whose Massachusetts Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation recently received a coveted National Recognition award at the NWTF annual meeting in Nashville. The Director thanked Mr. Fritze as a longtime and very active partner in mentoring and encouraging new hunters, particularly.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's March meeting is taking place later on the day of the meeting so he had no report.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the June Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected June 18, at 2:30 or 3:00 p.m., somewhere on the Cape. Staff was tasked with finding a suitable location and advising the Board members and the public as soon as possible.

Member's Comments

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

Mr. Sears reported another fabulous Western District trip to observe the evaluation of a female bear and her cubs in her winter den. He also reported that there continues to be a lot of concern about the effects of drawdowns and herbicides in lakes in Berkshire County, that he had just heard that a report had been issued on the topic in New Hampshire, and that he would investigate. He stated that he knows that MassWildlife staff is working on it and he appreciates that work, but wants to keep the issue top of mind.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to not return to open session but to immediately adjourn thereafter. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sears. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth

Secretary

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

March Agenda

Draft February meeting minutes for review

Commissioner Amidon's meeting comments

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2019)

Documentation for the executive session