

FINAL MINUTES

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)

12 Dec 2019

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

MEMBERS:

Present: Mark Mello, Joseph Larson, Dave Small, Kevin Powers, Wayne Petersen, Tim Flanagan, William Brumback

Absent: None

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Russ Hopping

Absent: Andy Finton, Bryan Windmiller

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Eve Schlüter, Jason Carmignani, Marion Larson

OTHERS:

Present:

– The meeting was called to order at 1:32 P.M. –

1. Approval of the November 2019 Minutes

Dave Small motioned that the November minutes be accepted, Joseph Larson seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Acting Chair's Comments – Mark Mello

Mark discussed and circulated several handouts: (1) Striped bass decline, (2) Field Guide to Flower Flies of Northeastern North America, (3) Field Guide to the Jewel Beetles (Coleoptera: Buprestidae) of Northeastern North America, (4) UV flashlight shows up certain larvae at night much better, and (5) Bees in Your Backyard.

Mark and Kevin also discussed how minutes will now be handled at meetings. Minutes will be taken by committee members on a rotating basis using the provided template. Kevin Powers (Secretary) will collect the completed template after the meeting and transcribe the notes into a draft document and submit to NHESP staff for edits. The draft will then be emailed to members by Jennifer Longsdorf.

3. Board Member's Comments – Joseph Larson

Dr. Larson summarized the last meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife (F&W) Board:

- (1) Lynn Harper presented on iNaturalist to the F&W Board.
- (2) Scientific articles introduced to the committee: mysterious disease in American beech, Declining North American avifauna
- (3) Commentary in forest restoration including broad look at forest restoration constraints and relationships with agriculture (transformative trees)

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

Eve provided the following comments regarding the NHESP:

- (1) Successful meeting of Mass. Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (MassPARC) on 11 Dec 2019 at the Westborough Field Headquarters. Full attendance. Many conservation partners participated. Meeting agenda and list of speakers provided in packets.
- (2) Handouts: Devens RFTA uses fire for conservation; Prescribed burning for wildlife: An essential land management tool; Home of the largest barn swallow colony in Massachusetts will be demolished over safety concerns; For sea turtles, Cape Cod Bay can be a deadly trap in the fall; Taxpayer Donations (2003-2018)
- (3) 30th anniversary of MESA: Planning, Programming, and Advertising for donation is in progress. Dedicating a special edition of the Massachusetts Wildlife magazine to NHESP and MESA. Tom French and Eve will co-write an introduction to the magazine. Events: 5k race for rare species on a WMA to highlight programs. Working on other items to highlight programs including success and revamping of the website.
- (4) National Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H. R. 3742) would provide states, territories, and tribes with \$1.4 billion annually to catalyze proactive, on-the-ground, collaborative efforts to restore essential habitat and implement key conservation strategies, as described in each state's Wildlife Action Plan. A version made it out of committee, but no details have been released yet. Moved to US Congress (House), but no mention of a Senate subcommittee.
- (5) NHESP push on modernization. VPRS needs to be updated by the end of 2020 because of dependency on Adobe Flash. Currently requesting input from users.

5. Impacts of Annual Winter Water Level Drawdowns on Littoral Zone Ecology in Massachusetts Lakes – Jason Carmignani, Aquatic Ecologist

Jason joined NHESP staff in late October. He discussed his doctorate work from UMass (Amherst).

Winter drawdowns in impounded/enhanced reservoirs to control aquatic vegetation (reduce macrophytes), protect shoreline from erosion, allow for boating/docking repairs, and cleanup the shoreline. Current drawdowns allow for up to 3 feet in reduction of the water level, which must be completed by November 1st and refilled by April 1st.

Jason's work measured the effect of drawdowns by phases and magnitude of the drawdowns (during drawdown, lowest water level and refill) on macrophytes. Drawdowns release nutrients.

Surface mussels were more affected in water fluctuation zones vs. control lakes. Buried mussels were not present in drawdown lakes. Drawdowns reduce or limit mussel colonization in <0.5 m depth. The drawdown magnitude significantly structures taxonomic and functional compositions. For example, Anicola snails populations decline with increasing drawdown magnitude. Non-swimming and long-lived taxa show declines to drawdown magnitude.

6. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Joseph Larson – Some discussion on proposed coyote regulations including response to the public meeting. Marion Larson provided handouts on current coyote hunting regulations.

Wayne Petersen – Discussed a recent article on “Shrinking Birds”. Using morphological measurements of songbirds measured from building strikes (primarily in Chicago, IL), bird body sizes are getting smaller. The article implicated a response to climate change (increasing temperature).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2019/12/04/birds-are-shrinking-these-scientists-say-its-consequence-global-warming/>

Bill Brumback – none

Tim Flanagan – Discussed the impacts of herbicides in lakes in Berkshire County. Discussed an article in the Berkshire Eagle noting that a judge is backing a herbicide test to kill Stockbridge Bowl weeds.

<https://www.berkshireeagle.com/stories/judge-backs-herbicide-test-to-kill-stockbridge-bowl-weeds,592115>

<https://www.berkshireeagle.com/stories/spilling-into-superior-court-stockbridge-bowl-milfoil-herbicide-fight-gets-into-the-weeds,589175>

Dave Small – Noted a yellow-bellied sapsucker at his feeder and that Christmas Bird Counts start across the state this Saturday.

Kevin Powers – Noted that a new study finds invasive “turf seaweed” (*Dasyatis japonica*) is starting to dominate the seafloor of the Gulf of Maine.

https://edition.pagesuite.com/popovers/dynamic_article_popover.aspx?artguid=efc2cae6-a378-4e45-97b3-ac4d8f67ab92&appid=1165

Also noted that the world's oceans are losing oxygen (2% loss from 1960 to 2010), but depletion can be as much as 40-50% in some areas like the tropics. Oceans are a major heatsink for greenhouse gases.

https://edition.pagesuite.com/popovers/dynamic_article_popover.aspx?artguid=45c2b206-3c91-466e-a0e9-71e67adb6148&appid=1165

Russ Hopping – Noted a male yellow-bellied sapsucker at his home. The Trustees of Reservations has obtained a permit from the USACE to cut salt marsh hay (*Spartina patens*) in Newbury for marsh ditch remediation. Once the Chp 91 license is obtained from DEP Waterways (anticipated by end of Dec), the project will be fully permitted. The project will move cut hay into ditches to replenish sediment in previously cut channels. The overall intent is to improve salt marsh quality and resilience on 85 acres.

– The meeting adjourned at 3:45 P.M. –

Drafted by: Bill Brumback
Transcribed by: Kevin Powers, Secretary
Submitted by: Jennifer Longsdorf