

FINAL MINUTES

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)

Monday, January 22, 2024
DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581
Meeting held virtually via Zoom webinar

MEMBERS:

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

Absent: Mark Mello

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Russ Hopping

Absent: Andy Finton

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Jesse Leddick

OTHERS: None

– The meeting was called to order at 1:39 P.M. –

1. Discussion of the “Report of the Climate Forestry Committee (CFC): Recommendations for Climate-Oriented Forest Management Guidelines”

A special meeting was called to order to discuss feedback from the Advisory Committee on the recent CFC report on climate-oriented forest management guidelines.

Matt Sisk organized and promoted discussion on the CFC report as these guidelines relate to habitat management for MESA-listed species managed by the MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MDFW). He thought it would be a beneficial discussion for this group, rather than seek individual opinions.

Natural Heritage has goals but organizationally lies within MDFW, an agency with broader management goals. There was some discussion about what is involved within the proposed forestry guidelines as related to the agency, but it was decided to limit discussion in this meeting to Natural Heritage and habitat management for species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA).

The committee broadly agreed with the report and thought it was a good guideline document, but members felt that as written it could lead to management conflicts. It was noted that currently the Wetlands Protections Act and management of the Commonwealth’s deer population present obstacles to managing deer by limiting options and flexibility. The

committee agreed that the CFC's guidelines may do the same by providing prescriptive rules that don't align across the regulatory framework of the Commonwealth.

A motion was made by Matt Sisk (seconded by Dave Small) to have this committee make a recommendation to advise the Director of MDFW and have this opinion submitted to Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) during the public comment period on the CFC report. The motion carried unanimously.

A robust discussion then took place by the committee with eventual agreement on a proposed response.

Since this opinion needs to be submitted shortly (by 1/24/2024) and could not be written within the timeframe of the meeting, a motion was made by Dave Small (seconded by Matt Sisk) to form a subcommittee (composed of Kevin Powers, Dave Small, and Bill Brumback) to draft the committee's response based on the preceding discussion. That response would then be submitted to Vice Chair Tim Flanagan, who will submit it to EEA prior to close of the public comment period on the CFC report and share it with MDFW Director Mark Tisa. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Kevin Powers (seconded by Dave Small).

– The meeting adjourned at 12:45 P.M. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Kevin Powers